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signed

July ~~10~~ 11th /71

With the Author's compliments

VENUS AND PSYCHE

WITH

OTHER POEMS

"Nè dovrà lo scrittore, detto che abbia alcuna cosa in stil grande, contenersi poi sempre in quel medesimo; che in ciò pure sarebbe eccesso, e ne nascerebbe noia; ma dovrà discendere di tanto in tanto da quella altezza, accostandosi con bel modo ad altri stili, e variando così il discorso secondo che richiederà la cosa istessa."

VENUS AND PSYCHE

WITH

OTHER POEMS

BY

RICHARD CRAWLEY

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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LOAN STACK

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VENUS AND PSYCHE

CANTO I.

VENUS AND PSYCHE.

CANTO I.

I.

Once on a time, no matter where or when,—
'Tis thus that all true stories should begin,
And mine's as true as any writ with pen,
Save such as spirits have a finger in,—
There lived a king, not unlike other men,
The father of three daughters without sin;
That is to say, assisted by his queen,
As sage a lady as had ever been.

II.

This couple flourished in the good old days,
When kings and queens wore crowns upon their head,
Dined in their robes with jewels all ablaze,
Nor took their state off when they went to bed,
But otherwise were simple in their ways,
From all that I remember to have read,
Had quarrels daily, kissed and quarrelled more,
And got these daughters as I said before.

III.

Two were the finest young princesses going,
Straight noses in the middle of their faces,
Necks, shoulders, ankles, all well worth the showing,
Besides those numerous other secret graces,
Which in that court there were no means of knowing;
Because in those benighted times and places
Still there were things not proper to be done,
And e'en great ladies went with something on.

IV.

Such were the eldest, haughty from their birth,
And haughtier from the moment they were wed,
Each seeming doubled in her former worth,
Since fate had called her to a royal bed.
Heaven, when it made a plaything for its mirth,
To all the ills it lavished on his head,
Hopes, wishes, linked to impotence and pain,
Added this last, and said "He shall be vain."

V.

Who should be humble if man's kind is not!
What formed more helpless or more blind than he!
And though there seem some pleasures in his lot,
How short of date and savour still they be!
Strength doomed to fail and beauty born to rot
And hearts to weary—this is what we see—
And minds so feeble that they swell the gloom,
Most like a candle placed in a dark room.

VI.

Meanwhile—let sages ponder what I say—
I've often noticed that a pretty woman
Quite turns one from philosophy away
The moment that she enters, and that so man,
Who else would uselessly bewail his day,
Forgets at once whatever Greek or Roman
Has said of human happiness and sorrow,
And puts off thoughts of dying till to-morrow.

VII.

A certain proof that nature loves us more
Than we ourselves do, weary prose and verse!
Man stays the same poor devil as before,
And thinking only makes the matter worse:
And so in lonely places, where his door
No female footstep crosses, to his curse,
To cure himself of that same vice of thinking
I've found he generally takes to drinking.

VIII.

Which means to say that you are now to see
The heroine of my story: you'll remember
There were three children in this family,
And you have still to know the youngest member:
Most different from her sisters twain was she,
Like a fair snowdrop after rude December,
Psyche her name, and Nature and no other,
Despite her royal parents, was her mother.

IX.

She was the fairest of all things that are;
Thus says the chronicler and then is dumb;
Nor brings a lantern to light up a star,
But leaves it in the darkness of its home;
Like some rude worshipper that stands afar,
And nearer than the threshold will not come,
Nor finds a language worthy to impart
The adoration that fills up his heart.

X.

I do as he, and say that she was fair,
And saying this say all that can be said;
Nor tell her eyes, nor ignorantly dare
To note the graces on her lips that fed;
'Twould task the colours of the earth and air
To paint one little hair upon her head;
And when 'twas done, many would turn away
And think it was a thing of every day.

XI.

For beauty it is like divinity
Set in the sacred twilight of its shrine,
And he who comes too near the mystery
Finds that but human that he deemed divine;
Like the fond child who takes a light to see
The little herald of the evening shine,
And for the star that sparkled in his way
Sees but a worm, the symbol of decay.

XII.

But should some reader, neither light nor vain,
One who has loved as he perhaps has done
The teller of this story, still be fain
To see this loveliest thing beneath the sun;
Let him interrogate his heart and brain,
And from the pictures that are stamped thereon
Call up one image, early written there,
Then in his youth when still the page was fair.

XIII.

They say that old men, who have all forgot,
Doting, and blind, and waiting for the grave,
Hopes, crimes, faults, follies, triumphs, and what not!
And all that Fortune or Ambition gave;
The thing done yesterday, the face, the spot
Seen half an hour ago—this virtue have,
Clear to their mind as in a glass appears
The smallest trifle of their childish years.

XIV.

And there are moments when the heart is so,
  And everything the world has writ therein
Seems like a dream or tale heard long ago,
  Shadowy and dark, as though it ne'er had been;
While firm and clear, a figure that we know,
  Led in by Memory, steps upon the scene—
Form, face, and air, just as she was before,
With every little ornament she wore.

XV.

This let him think is Psyche! so will he
  Know all perfection was summed up in her,
As Nature, weary of variety,
  Had chosen one face for her interpreter,
Given her the treasures of her earth and sea,
  And called Creation for her worshipper,
The air she breathed, the ground she moved upon,
And everything that's looked on by the sun.

XVI.

Among the cities of that continent
And nearest islands of the neighbouring deep,
A sudden rumour of this wonder went,
And, as when falls from the adjacent steep
A stone, some hand invisible has sent
Upon the waters of a lake asleep,
Spread into circles, widening day by day
Till in the farthest earth it died away.

XVII.

Some said the child and mistress of the foam,
Gracious and pitiful of mortals' pain,
Venus, in answer to their prayers, had come,
Leaving her chambers in the secret main,
And in an earthly town set up her home,
Showing her face unto mankind again,
Welcome and wonderful as comes the light
After the darkness of the northern night.

XVIII.

Others, that jealous of her sister's name,
Nor willing in good gifts to stand behind,
The power from whom all other blessings came,
The bright and bounteous mother of mankind,[1]
By combination of the starry frame
This rival to her Venus had designed,
A new and maiden goddess of delight
To dwell for ever in her children's sight.

XIX.

So all set out to see her and adore;
Those who were rich sold that which they possessed,
The spendthrift took the relics of his store,
The miser drew his treasures from his chest,
Those who had nothing begged from door to door,
And old men, just departing to their rest,
Their lands and houses to their children gave,
And journeyed 'neath the shadow of the grave.

XX.

And every road that to her country led
Was white with pilgrims never looking back;
And towns and cities erst inhabited,
Passed by the travellers on their onward track,
Were voiceless as the dwellings of the dead,
Save where an ox, forgotten at the rack,
Moaned in its hunger, or a dog in vain
Bayed for his master looking at the train.

XXI.

To reach the miracle and perish there,
This was the hope and sum of their desire;
Cnidos and Paphos both deserted were,
And no man thought of Venus or her ire;
Her temples and her palaces were bare,
Her altars widowed of their sacred fire,
Her rites forgotten, and no garland laid
Upon the brows Praxiteles had made.

XXII.

But round the dwelling of her mortal peer,
The earthly maiden that her semblance wore,
A mighty multitude from far and near
Waited each morning for her opening door;
As waits the Magian till his god appear,
Or as the maid descending to the shore
Waits till the mists that hide the bark arise
And render back her lover to her eyes.

XXIII.

There stood the victim ready for the knife,
By it a priest, and here a company
Of youths and virgins in the morn of life,
With lutes and instruments of minstrelsy,
And dancers waiting for the joyous strife
Round tables laden from the land and sea;
And here a long procession from the hill,
Small in the distance, seeming to stand still.

XXIV.

When she the lady of their thoughts and hours
Rose from her bed and looked into the street
All hands were raised to welcome her, and flowers
Before the coming of her happy feet
Fell from the housetops and the sills in showers;
The valleys and the hollow hills repeat
The acclamations of the worshippers,
And Echo knows no other name than hers.

XXV.

Meanwhile the rightful Venus from afar
Gazed on the dust of her forsaken fanes;
Then with a laugh portending wrath and war
Turned to the beauteous world o'er which she reigns:
"Am not I parent of all things that are,
Source of the life and motion in men's veins;"(2)
Thus she began—"And shall I stoop to own
A rival there where I have ruled alone!

XXVI.

"Was it for nothing that the Phrygian boy,
Loved for his justice by all-seeing Jove,
Judged me the fairest on the plains of Troy,
Though there were there two others from above
And proffered greatness in exchange for joy?
Yet they were vanquished by the Queen of love:
He stretched his hand to offer them the prize,
But dropped it, meeting with my starry eyes.

XXVII.

"And shall my slave, the creature of a day,
Vaunting her slight and perishable charms,
That scarce can blossom ere they fade away,
That every shower and wind of heaven alarms,
Think to condemn my empire to decay,
Usurp the duty of my servant's arms,
Or Venus see, contented in her shame,
Another take her honours in her name?

XXVIII.

"No, by great Heaven!" and more she would have said,
But that in pausing her incurious eye
Fell on the waters of a fountain-head,
Which as it chanced before her feet did lie:
Pebbles and sand of silver were its bed,
And gazing in its crystal absently,
Her anger faded in forgetfulness,
And nought she saw save her own loveliness.

XXIX.

Her skin the colour of an ocean shell,
Whereon the rose did battle with the snow;
Her eyes where laughter ever seemed to dwell,
Her cheeks where beauty's dimples come and go,
Her lips half parted as in act to tell
That which the heart of every man would know;
And locks that over her white shoulder rolled,
Like to a shower of heaven-descending gold.

XXX.

Round these a wreath of water-weeds was set
Which in the fair sides of that fountain grew,
Brighter than any royal coronet
That ever art or human fancy drew,
Whose skeins descending round her image met
As if to veil from every curious view
The beauteous things which modesty conceals
And wanton thought scarce to itself reveals.

XXXI.

It seemed the head that should be pillowed there
Where rose the fairy hillocks of her breast,
Might in an instant say good-night to care
And pass forgetful to immortal rest;
Or if his sleep by visions troubled were,
'Twould be by such as wait upon the blest,
Light as the clouds whose shadows pass in June
Nor break the slumber of the southern noon.

XXXII.

How long the goddess would have stopped to look,
Let each fair reader from her practice say!
If that by gazing in a glass or brook
Man could become but half as wise as they,
I know I'd study in that sacred book
At morn and eve and middle of the day,
Where'er I found a mirror or a light,
And keep a candle in my room at night.

XXXIII.

Indeed there's something graceful to my mind,
In that naive vanity that nature teaches;
And this I'll hold to though it lags behind
Much that our prudery and virtue preaches;
Besides 'tis best to take them as we find,
And that's the utmost that my wisdom reaches:
And so we'll leave the moralists in their glory
And turn again to my veracious story.

XXXIV.

For all I know she would have looked for ever,
But as she gazed upon her image came,
Equipped with bow, wings, arrows, and with quiver,
Another form between her and the same,
And with a shout that made her start and shiver,
And seemed to fill the forest with her name,
Rang out the voice of that malicious elf,
"Mamma as usual looking at herself!"

XXXV.

The goddess turned and saw—her hopeful son,
Who still a rebel 'gainst restraint and rule (3)
Through every sort of wickedness had run
Almost between the cradle and the school;
He was a rake if ever there was one,
And ne'er a maid or matron played the fool,
But by the busy gossips of the minute
'Twas said that Cupid had a finger in it.

XXXVI.

He was the bugbear of each Dean and Proctor,
Of heads of families and matchmaking mothers;
And still morality complained he mocked her
In spite of all the babies that she smothers:
Sometimes he gave employment to the doctor,
But that's a subject that I leave to others;
And each philosopher that talked about him
Declared the world would better be without him.

XXXVII.

I mean each old philosopher,—the young,
Whether philosophers or not, were for him;
Most of the poets also that had sung
About him, found it wisest to adore him;
And though the women with consenting tongue
Made it a point of honour to abhor him,
'Twas known by those who read their secret breast
He was at bottom what they liked the best.

XXXVIII.

Indeed the pretty fools were oft beguiled
To let him nestle in their bosom, where
Awhile he slept as tranquil as a child,
While Peace and Hope and many a vision fair
Watched by his cradle; then he rose and smiled
And spread his restless pinions to the air,
Leaving the stings of a reproving mind,
And fear and shame and agony behind.

XXXIX.

But still 'twas strange, the moment he returned,
Like moths that flutter round a candle's light,
And ne'er the wiser grow for being burned,
Each flew to meet him with the same delight:
There are some lessons that are never learned,
Some students too that will not read aright,
Not having had a solid education,
Which ought to be provided by the nation.

XL.

He was in short, to own what can't be hid,
The pest of all respectable society,
Though nature prompted half of what he did,
The rest a boyish hatred of propriety,
In all his actions certain to be chid,
E'en when he did a good deed for variety;
Perhaps not quite as black as he was painted,
Still, like the devil, very far from sainted.

XLI.

'Tis what oft happens with an only boy
Without a father who his faults should tell,
At once his mother's tyrant and her joy,
He knows the sex too early and too well,
Tasting the sweets of power without alloy,
Left with the maids to be their oracle,
And taught almost ere he begins to live
There's nothing that a woman won't forgive.

XLII.

That is, I mean, supposing the offender
Be masculine; for if, as well may be,
The outrage come from their own gentle gender
Then they can hate as heartily as we,
Or worse, and nothing that ill chance can send her
Will e'er restore her to their charity,
Being without man's chief redeeming feature
The easy apathy of mere good-nature.

XLIII.

Such as he was, a better instrument
For Venus and her vengeance could not be;
And straight remembering her fell intent
Forgot an instant in her vanity,
She ran and said, "What happy wind has sent
My darling Cupid to my love and me,
To mock his mother who no thought has got
In which her treasure and her pride is not?

XLIV.

" But hear, my pet, there is a mortal fair
Against that mother and her laws a sinner;
Where'er she goes the boobies rush to stare,
Though for my poor self I see nothing in her;
A chit half formed, a monkey that should wear
Her short frock still and give her doll her dinner!
But you shall see the thing this very day,
And then you'll own the truth of what I say."

XLV.

Cupid assented, nothing loath to know
Who might be owner of the wondrous face,
The which had power to anger Venus so,
'Twas all he understood about the case:
And first he carefully unstrung his bow,
And, putting back an arrow in its place,
Went with his mother on the path she showed,
And heard the tale of Psyche on the road.

XLVI.

The way was long, but Venus found it short,
Nor yet had finished half she had to say,
When that they came unto the mortal court
Wherein her rival in men's hearts held sway:
The plain was white with tents, and in the port
With idle sails full many a vessel lay,
And many a horse stood neighing in its stall,
And in the city was high festival.

XLVII.

Behind the palace ran a garden fair
Placed towards the sunset, sloping to the sea
Whose waters sheltered by the mountains were,
And still and clear as any lake could be;
Between the shores and bosomed in soft air,
Like to a vision of the fantasy,
An island lay, beneath its woods asleep,
And seemed a forest planted in the deep.

XLVIII.

Upon one side girt by the shadowing trees
There was a grassy theatre, like to those
The shepherd or the wandering schoolboy sees
There in the Wiltshire solitudes, nor knows
Whether that nature on these fairy leas
Did carve these mimic hollows for her shows,
Or hands of former tillers of the plains,
Of whom no note or memory remains.

XLIX.

The stage of this green theatre was the sand,
Back in the distance lay the open main,
And here the simple citizens had planned
To body forth unto men's eyes again
The scene of Venus coming to the land
After her rising from the watery plain
Fresh as the foam, and virgin as the snow,
Such as she came to Paphos long ago.

L.

And all around upon each crescent side
There was a gay and various company,
As at a wedding waiting for the bride,
A sea of faces looking eagerly,
Where round a point whose precipices hide
The outer Ocean and its mystery
Came sounds of music in the breeze's lull
As if to herald something wonderful.

LI.

The day drew towards the evening, and the sun
Hung o'er the far hills as if loath to go,
Lighting the city that he looked upon
With the last beams of his departing glow,
When through the shadow of the mountain dun
A barge came floating statelily and slow
Over the watery threshold of the bay,
And seemed to grow in splendour on its way.

LII.

The oars were silver, and the sides were gold,
And all that Asia has of rich or rare,
Purple, and diamonds from Golconda old
Set in the prow and in the cushions were;
Silk were the ropes that did the rudder hold,
And in the stern hung in the summer air
A canopy, than which no finer weaves
The gossamer upon the morning leaves.

LIII.

And Psyche stood beneath like a tall flower,
Arrayed in beauty as the lilies are,
Making all else seem common; now the power
Of Night called up the shadow from afar,
And bearing onward through the silent hour,
Under the twilight and the evening star,
The bark had touched the limit of the sand,
And Psyche rose and stepped upon the land.

LIV.

As when the lamps are lighted on the dome
  Upon St Peter's at the festival,
When Easter to its votaries has come,
  And Lent gives place unto new Carnival,
And he who stands upon that night in Rome
  Between the Pincian fountain and the wall
Under the ilexes, beholds the light
Cleave like a sword the curtain of the night.

LV.

So as she set her foot upon the strand,
  The woods, the shores, the mountains, and the bay,
Lit by a thousand torches on each hand,
  Broke in an instant into radiant day:
And to the seaborn wonder from the land,
  Treading a joyous measure on their way,
Full in the sight of the admiring throng,
A choir of youths and maidens sang this song:—

MAIDENS.

Who is she that fairer is
  Than the Queen whom we adore?
Nothing half so bright as this
  Ever greeted us before:
Dian's sister she might be,
Younger and less proud than she.

Haply she is one that dwells
  By the mountain or the wood,
Or beside the crystal wells
  Of old Ocean's sacred flood.
You, that are our playfellows!
Is there none of you that knows?

FIRST YOUTH.

I have seen her long ago:
  If the soul in exile here
Doth at times remember so

Something of its former sphere,
If there's truth in what they tell,
There I knew, and knew her well.

FIRST MAIDEN.

Underneath her feet are flowers,
Round her head the zephyrs play;
Never in my waking hours
Saw I what I see to-day:
Yet I know not, but she seems
The companion of my dreams.

SECOND YOUTH.

Sage philosophers in this
That your riddling tongues discuss,
Nothing new or strange there is,
It is known to all of us:
'Tis a thing, I do not doubt,
Maids have often dreamed about.

This is the high Queen of Joy,
From her wont and secret hold
Come to couple girl and boy:
Were your rebel hearts as cold
As we read not in your eyes,
She would thaw them to our sighs.

SECOND MAIDEN.

These are Dian's votaries,
If the glorious thing we see
Be the Empress of the seas,
Little comfort 'tis to thee;
None of those that are divine
Ever blessed a tongue like thine.

SECOND YOUTH.

My tongue I from my mother got
When she said my father yea;
Prudes perhaps may like it not,

There are those less nice than they;
E'en your Dian, 'tis well known,
Did not always sleep alone.

SECOND MAIDEN.

'Twas a ribald of thy sort,
That in scorn of Dian's law
Casting rude eyes on her sport
Dearly paid for what he saw;
Hunted by his hounds he fled,
Wearing horns upon his head.

SECOND YOUTH.

'Tis the lot of god and man
Since the day that they were born;
Few the married wights that can
Boast of freedom from the horn:
Why should we be loath to bear
That which all our rulers wear?

CHORUS.

Foolish tongues be quiet!
Ye know not what ye say:
Let difference and riot
Be silent on this day,
And our voices meeting
Give this stranger greeting!

From Ocean's green portals
A bright goddess came,
And the winds bore to mortals
The sound of her name.
Earth broke into flowers
At the touch of her feet,
And the slow-footed hours
Grew flying and fleet;
And Friendship and Love
Were the first in her train;
And the swallow and dove
Came with her from the main:

Like the swallow she fled
  Leaving Winter behind,
And cold as the dead
  Grew the hearts of mankind:
As the swallow comes back
  On the wings of the night,
And fast on his track
  Follow Spring and Delight,
She is come, and we bow
  In rapture to-day;
Will she stay with us now,
  Or again flee away?

LVI.

They ceased, and in an instant all was still,
  Save that the voice of Echo seemed to say,
Answering in prayer their question from the hill:
  "Stay with us ever and flee not away!"
Each turned to go according to his will,
  Faded in night the momentary day:
And now the last bark from the isle was gone,
  And Venus and her son were left alone.

LVII.

Alone, and deaf unto his mother's call,
Cupid stayed silent bound in reverie,
Forgot his wit and wickedness, and all
The cruel sports that please his fantasy;
The tyrant wore the fetters of the thrall,
Beauty had tamed her conqueror, and he
Who still had followed where free fancy flew,
Stood lost and wondering at a thing so new.

LVIII.

It seemed the vessel that his Psyche bare
Had with it ta'en the best half of his heart;
And as the worm divided by the share
Still blindly strives to join its other part,
Taught by its instinct that its life is there,
So Cupid stricken by a mortal smart
Thought not to ask for counsel in his head,
But blindly turned to where his love had fled.

LIX.

At last he woke—the least that he could do—
For Venus held and shook him by the shoulder:
"Must I for ever waste my words on you?
I'll be revenged ere I'm a minute older;
Her dress, her hair, the glances that she threw!
Pray, Cupid, did you ever see a bolder
Minx, or d'ye think the whole world holds a creature
So fit to take in dull male human nature?

LX.

"Cupid, I charge you by the torch you bear,
And by the sweet wounds that your arrows give,
And by these breasts that once your cradle were,
That oft your wayward mischief would forgive,
Help me to punish this presumptuous fair;
And if my woman's weakness lets her live,
Let her live so that living she may say,
'It had been better had I died to-day!'

LXI.

" Let her love madly, and beyond recall ![4]
She is a maiden, and of royal birth ;
So let the first flower of her fancy fall
Upon the meanest thing that walks the earth
In face, form, fortune and estate, and all
That most men deem of honour and of worth !
Let him each day grow baser than before !
And let her each day love him more and more !

LXII.

" Let him be young and seem as he were old,
Fouler in youth than others in decay,
Cringing to men, and but with women bold,
A blight upon the morning of her May,
A drunkard, and to all her kindness cold ;
Curses and blows the portion of her day,
Blest if he let her the handmaiden be
Of drabs more wretched and more vile than he ! "

LXIII.

So saying, Venus, rising to depart,
First threw her snowy arms around her son,
And oft and oft she pressed him to her heart,
And rained sweet kisses on him many a one;
Then took her way unto her home apart,
Turning to where the streams of ocean run,
Lit by the moon, and crossed the sands, and gave
Her rosy feet unto the dancing wave.

LXIV.

Nor were the watery people wanting then
From all the tribes that 'neath green ocean dwell,
Creatures with beards and faces like to men,
Nereids, and Tritons of the vocal shell,
Folk that are hidden now from mortal ken,
Save what the sailors in their legends tell
Of maids that round the rocks their tresses lave,
And, singing, lure the seaman to his grave.

LXV.

This combed her hair, and that one held the glass
Between the wave and a down-looking star;
These cleft the sea, to let their lady pass,
This set his finny back beneath her car;
And one who mounted on a dolphin was,
Rode as the herald of her march afar;
And as he went a mighty horn he blew,
Which all the people to her escort drew.

LXVI.

Meanwhile, unknowing of her rival's hate,
Psyche stood pining in her beauty's flower,(5)
Like a fair tree that blossoms out of date
At the year's ending 'neath December's hour,
Pleasing the eye when all is desolate,
Seeming the gift of a celestial power;
But still to die ere April is its doom,
And ne'er fulfil the promise of its bloom.

LXVII.

Her sisters, who were beautiful, although
No wondering nations to their fame had come,
Cagna and Strega, wedded long ago,
Were each the mistress of a royal home;
While Psyche lonely to her bed did go,
Or sleepless through the corridors would roam,
Counting the hours, and waiting for the sun,
Admired, praised, worshipped, but beloved by none.

LXVIII.

All through the dark she waited for the day:
Day came, and straight the night she did desire;
And oft upon the mountains she would stray
Like that sweet daughter of a ruthless sire,
Wailing her solitude; and did her way
Lead to a fountain 'neath the Dog-star's ire,
Her thirst unslaking, she would turn and flee,
Hating the face that all had sighed to see.

LXIX.

Her wretched father doubting of this thing,
Reading the anger of a goddess here,
Gathered great gifts and many an offering,
And to Miletus bade the pilot steer,
Where Phœbus dwelt, a prophet and a king,
Asking a husband for his daughter dear:
Sped by the winds the ship returning brought
An answer, not the answer that he sought.

Place the bride upon her bier!
Take her to the Mount of Fear!
Clothe her in her grave-clothes, so
As the dead are clothed, and go!

Hope no son of mortal race
Or man's nature,—in his place,
Him who awes all living things
With the terror of his wings!

Him who even Jove doth dread,
And the Heaven overhead,
And the gods in gloom that dwell
Standing by the streams of Hell.

LXX.

Thus or like this the holy doggerel ran,
For the original was writ in Latin,(6)
A tongue I studied when my life began,
And still can construe, though I'd not say that in
Oxford or Cambridge, among wights who can
Tell in a moment whether you are pat in
This or its sister, and will ask a man, sir,
Questions that Priscian scarce would like to answer.

LXXI.

Talking of Latin, one word—does it not?—
Serves in that tongue for prophet and for poet;
Though certain 'tis, if they the gift have got,
The prophets in their verses seldom show it;

Yet 'tis a thing that should not be forgot,
For it explains unto the folk that know it,
Why late in England every rhyming spark
Uses a speech so difficult and dark.

LXXII.

But to my tale: The king, who till that day
Nothing had known but calm and happiness,
Smit by this message ne'er a word did say,
But stood a space alone with his distress;
Then to the palace sadly bent his way,
Where in a moment of sweet idleness
Psyche embroidering with her mother sate,
And seemed more gay than she had been of late.

LXXIII.

Perhaps it was the influence of the time,
Summer was waning into Autumn then,
And faintly tinged the green leaves of the lime,
And all the fields were full of girls and men

Gathering the walnuts, or the early prime
Of the sunned vineyards, and now and again
Snatches of song from singers out of sight
Spoke of calm peace and natural delight.

LXXIV.

It is a season when the heart is still,
And earth seems bountiful, and nature kind,
Spreading a banquet upon vale and hill
For each to feast according to his mind;
The golden age come back to those that till;
Life and its cares a moment lag behind,
Light mirth breaks jocund in a thousand wiles,
And sadness only shows itself in smiles.

LXXV.

Their work had dropped unheeded to their knees,
One hand of Psyche's in her mother's lay,
And each was silent; for the elder sees
Her child is tranquil, and has nought to say;

'Tis sympathy that tells her this will please
Her daughter, though she knows not why to-day
Her mood is altered, nor what magic stirs
A soul more sensitive and fine than hers.

LXXVI.

And what thought Psyche? not herself could tell,
'Twas more a dream without an incident
That on her tirèd spirit gently fell,
A taleless messenger that brought content:
It is a feeling I have known as well,
And still have held a bad presentiment,
That swift will usher direr troubles in,
Like to a calm ere winter's storms begin.

LXXVII.

The father gazed a moment at the sight,
Placed in the doorway, and himself unseen;
Then like a murderer who walks by night,
Trembling advanced, and crossed the space between,

Coming to stab their peace, and scarce aright
Guiding his footsteps stood beside the queen,
And with a voice that broken was and low,
Told the dread tidings of eternal woe.

LXXVIII.

Uprose the mother, in her anguish wild
Turning at bay most like a savage thing;
One arm was raised, the other round her child
As if she saw a hunter in the king.
Reason a moment from its seat exiled
Stood mute and far, nor when it came could bring
Aught but a knowledge of her misery,
And dull despair more fell than agony.

LXXIX.

Called by her cries the frightened household ran,
And filled the place with shrieks and women's woe;
Fast sped the news as none but ill news can,
And soon the town their darling's doom did know:

Each left his home and sought his fellow-man,
And joined in groups, and looked, and whispered low
As in a city a despatch has crossed
Bearing the tidings of a battle lost.

LXXX.

Within stood Pysche, calmest of them all—
It seemed the message was no news to her;
As a rich man who's taken in his hall
Full in the sight of each scared banqueter,
Without a word obedient to the call
He goes, and little the arrest doth stir
Him whom it touches most—suspense is o'er—
That he was ruined, that he knew before.

LXXXI.

"And why," she said, "dear parents, wail ye now,
Fouling with idle tears your hapless age?
What mean this dust and ashes on your brow?
Why beat your breasts in unavailing rage?

When Heaven has spoken, mortals can but bow.
No late lamentings will its wrath assuage;
'Tis something sharp the pang my soul endures,
But I am twice unhappy seeing yours.

LXXXII.

"You are my authors, and those breasts are mine,
And each gray hair much dearer than my own,
Which impious men too lightly named divine,
And now as lightly would their fault atone.
The cup is poured and I must drink the wine,
It is too late to leave it or to moan;
We can but reap the sowing of our spring,
This is the harvest that my praises bring!

LXXXIII.

"It is too late—when all men called me fair,
Gave me the worship to another due,
Named me a name I had no right to bear,
And thought no parents e'er so blest as you,

Then was the time to weep and rend your hair,
Knowing my days were destined to be few;
The name of Venus leads me to the grave, (7)
I do but pay the outrage that I gave.

LXXXIV.

"But I forget, my time is mine no more,
My lord is waiting, and his slave must come;
Yet ere I cross the threshold of this door,
Farewell this palace that was once my home!
Farewell this garden that I loved before!
In other walks and places I must roam,
My groom a spectre, and my train the dead,
And worms to spoil me for my bridal bed."

LXXXV.

With her own voice she bade the bier be borne,
With her own hands she drest her in her shroud,
And her own mourner led the pomp forlorn,
Followed by grief and lamentation loud;

The rock was reached 'twixt midnight and the morn ;
The parents turning to their palace proud
Entered, and hid their faces from the light
In tears and anguish and perpetual night.

LXXXVI.

But Zephyr swiftly came where Pysche lay
Alone with grief and darkness and her fears,
And took and bore her in his arms away,
Waving his wings and drying all her tears,
And scattering wide those foul weeds on the way
Through which the sun of her fair face appears,
Gently flew down into a valley deep,
And left her lying on its flowers asleep.

VENUS AND PSYCHE.

CANTO II.

VENUS AND PSYCHE.

CANTO II.

I.

I FIND this story grows upon my hand,
And half regret that I began to write it;
Nothing, dear sister, but your high command
Had e'er induced my slow pen to indite it;
Yet am I treading in a sacred land,
On the sea's brink stands Shelley's house in sight, it
Is a square building with a garden, and a
Row of white columns propping a verandah.

II.

'Twas here that Byron came to visit him,
And oft no doubt they climbed the hill together
Along the small paths the fig's leaves make dim,(8)
Mixed with the chestnut's e'en in summer weather:
'Twas chance brought me here, following my whim
That blows me this and that way like a feather;
And now I'm come all things to stay invite me,
So much the village and its ways delight me.

III.

'Tis a sea-shore Arcadia, nor are here
Wanting the nymphs that made that country gay,
From white Carrara and the places near,
Chattering and swimming over all the bay:
Lightly they cleave its green depths without fear,
Then to the rocky caverns take their way,
Where they rerobe and swift emerge again,
A sore temptation to the sons of men.

IV.

'Twas but last night I turned to seek my bed,
When I was wakened by the sound of laughter,
And from the window thrusting out my head,
Saw what I oft shall think upon hereafter,—
A choir of maidens following her who led
Where the fleet main and her white arms did waft her,
Just where the moon its cloudless radiance gave,
And streaked with white the summit of the wave.

V.

Swift as they crossed its silver I could mark
Here a white breast, and there a snowy shoulder;
And here was not, what Scotchmen call a sark—
Such sights were common ere the world grew older;
Then like a dream they passed into the dark,
As if they knew that a profane beholder,
Intent on every shadowy revelation,
Was taking from them lessons in natation.

VI.

'Twas from the Cross of Malta I came hither,
Which from old chivalry its name derives;
But now in these degenerate times flock thither
Rich merchants and their fashionable wives;
If aught should lead you to La Spezia, whither
Most people go at one time in their lives,
"Experto crede" I've been fleeced; whate'er
Murray may say, believe me, don't go there.

VII.

The robber baron had his citadel,
The inn's the modern stronghold of oppression;
I don't know but I like the first as well—
There is one here of which I've ta'en possession,
Set o'er the waters like a sentinel,
Where I now sit and finish this digression,
Wishing that time could tarry on his way,
And all the year be August as to-day.

VIII.

Now every little bird broke into song,
And Psyche woke her terrors half forgot,
And wondering asked how she had slept so long,
And who had brought her to so sweet a spot;
Then rose, and wandering these new scenes among,
A little mused upon her dubious lot,
And as she goes each anxious feeling flees,
And leaves but marvel at the things she sees.

IX.

Hard by the glade an ancient forest stood,
Where Twilight dwelt with Stillness by his side;
Nor aught was stirring in this sacred wood,
Save where afar a fountain she espied,
Whose waters seemed to play to solitude;
Nearer she came, and now the shades divide,
And parting show to her astonished face
The palace of the Genius of the place.

X.

With towers that rose like vapours to the sky,
Marble its front and of a thousand hues,
And on the pavement flowers of many a dye,
And every herb that drinks the morning dews:
All things that swim, or run, or creep, or fly,
Savage or tame, created for man's use,
Some hand had painted on the pillars tall,
And walls and ceiling of the outer hall.

XI.

Within the architect divine had drawn
The story of the gods and life of man;
Here Venus stood upon a flowery lawn,
Taking the prize from whence Troy's woes began;
And here a Nymph fast followed by a Faun;
And laughing here each god and goddess ran
To see the pair that honest Vulcan caught—
Sure never husband had so strange a thought.

XII.

Here by a stream an Amazon was laid,
And by her side a warrior kneeling low;
A dart had pierced the bosom of the maid,
And blood is mingling with its hues of snow:
He strives to stanch it; but life's roses fade
On her young lips; her cheeks grow wan, and slow
Her breath comes interrupted, while afar
Beyond them raves the fury of the war.

XIII.

And here a village 'mid its vines was set,
And many a red-cheeked lass and sturdy loon
There with the bridegroom and the bride were met,
Lit by the light of a September moon:
The fiddlers' eyes and throats with wine were wet—
Leapt to the notes light hearts and heavy shoon;
And a blind minstrel led the festival,
High on a cask, the merriest of them all.

XIV.

Here was a ploughman going forth to till,
Pressing a plough that two strong oxen drew;
And here a woodman labouring with à will
To fell an oak that many a winter knew;
And here a miller stood before his mill;
And here a falconer his falcon flew;
And here a group of maidens at the well,
Telling each other all there was to tell.

XV.

Psyche a season at the entrance stayed,
Then took a step to look at this or that,
Returned, went on, half pleased and half afraid,
And pausing felt her heart go pit-a-pat;
Then bolder growing crossed the colonnade,
And still found something new to wonder at;
So from one room into another passed,
Saying each moment this should be the last.

XVI.

Nothing that Earth contains was wanting there—
Jewels and gems flashed ever on her eyes—
And much she marvelled that no locks there were,
Nor chains, nor guardians to this Paradise:
Where'er she goes her feet are free as air,
Nothing but Echo to her steps replies;
It seemed the place in which his wealth was stored
Was little known or honoured by its lord.

XVII.

Weary at last, she still was loath to go,
When a clear voice broke gently on her ear;
Scarcely she knew whether she dreamed or no,
No one she saw although the sound was near.
"Lady," it said, "what need to labour so
And tire with seeing? everything that's here
Is yours, and we you see not are your squires
To do the service that your soul desires.

XVIII.

"You will have time to look whene'er you please,
When rest and leisure tempt you to the sight;
Were it not better now to take your ease,
And lose your stiffness in the bath's delight,
Or sleep awhile? but as our mistress sees
Fit, let it be!" Here the obsequious wight
Was silent, and his parting intonation
Seemed with a bow to finish the oration.

XIX.

Psyche half hoped that he had more to say,—
A house so splendid, servants so discreet,
And all her own, and after yesterday!
She ne'er had wearied of a theme so sweet:
Thought she could sleep a little, if she may;
Scarce had she thought it, when before her feet
A curtain parted, and a chamber fair
And all the service of the bath was there.

XX.

Fresh from her bath and slumber she arose,
And sees a table with all dainties spread,
A cover and a seat, to which she goes;
She was so hungry that a piece of bread
Would have been welcome, and full well she knows
Her major-domo stands behind her head,
And with his fellows of his queen takes care,
For nought she wants but in a trice 'tis there.

XXI.

The board was cleared, and now a lute began,
That hung in space, and seemed as it would fall;
Over the chords the viewless fingers ran,
Peopling with sound the solitary hall;
And from the air another of the clan
Moved with his wings unto the player's call:
Now the strain changed, and to the music came
A laughing voice that mingled with the same.

SONG.

1.

Who these bowers findeth,
Time no longer mindeth;
When day's joys are done,
Night's are then begun.

2.

Here no gadfly teases,
  Here no danger roameth,
And of all the breezes
  Zephyr only cometh.

3.

Pleasure like a flower
  Springing, and as never
Mortals yet had power
  To enjoy for ever,
Fountains without number
Lulling into slumber,
Falling in still weather
Softly, so, together.

XXII.

Now evening came and Psyche went to rest,
And in the night a strange soft sound she hears ; (9)
A thousand nameless terrors fill her breast,
And she would speak, but cannot for her fears—
As the tired fugitive by sleep opprest,
Sees in a dream the coming of the spears,
And strives to rise, but like a stone lies still,
Finding his feet rebellious to his will.

XXIII.

The husband comes in darkness and unknown,
And ere the morning goes unknown away,
Next eve returns, then leaves her all alone,
And ne'er awaits the rising of the day ;
And as time flies, her heart, no more her own,
Longs for the moment when her love can say,
" Now he is coming," and his voice supplies
That which the dark unto her sight denies.

XXIV.

Thus without change her tranquil moments flow,
To-day departed and to-morrow came,
Like to the streams that through the meadows go,
And never stagnate, yet are still the same.
There are some lives that Heaven has ordered so,
And one, dear sister, that I need not name;
And yet, believe me, 'tis a thing so rare
That you may search the world nor find it there.

XXV.

For most life's a long battle, nothing more,
An endless struggle in which no one wins;
And when the labour of the fight is o'er,
Why then the tedium of the camp begins;
Man's story that which it has been before,
A thread that fate and his own folly spins;
Peace the one good that still his soul desires,
And the one thing of which he soonest tires.

XXVI.

So 'twas with Psyche, though she knew it not—
A cloud had crossed the heaven of her content;
Her fears and sufferings she had all forgot,
And longed unconscious for some new event;
There was a sameness in her happy lot,
And novelty its aid no longer lent,
When that her lover with the night had flown,
To pass the hours that she must spend alone.

XXVII.

He came one evening, breathing mystery,
Spoke of strange fears, and perils in the air,
And said the hour was come when he should see
Whether his Psyche was as wise as fair;
The danger near and fatal well might be,
Unless his darling for them both takes care;
Rumour had led her sisters to the coast,
And if they find her she is surely lost.

XXVIII.

" To-day I saw them on the neighbouring hill,
Now if you love me neither look nor hear!
And if they call you let your voice be still,
Nor if you see them let your feet go near!"
Psyche consents according to his will,
She sees not really there is aught to fear;
Yet 'tis his wish, and she has nought to say—
It is a wife's first duty to obey.

XXIX.

But when he's gone her sorrow finds a voice:
" Am I for ever to live lonely so,
Cut off from each companion of my choice,
With night and sound the only friends I know?
My sisters come, and bid me to rejoice—
I hear, I fly to welcome them; but no!
This is forbid, I stand upon the brink
And see the waters that I must not drink.

XXX.

"I had a linnet once my mother's page
Took from its nest, and gave the bird to me;
I fed the pretty wanderer in a cage,
But it was happier in its liberty:
I am that linnet, and in idle rage
Beat at my grate, and flutter to be free;
The bars are gilded, but 'tis still the same,
It is a prison, though without the name."

XXXI.

Her husband comes and finds her in her tears,
Asks her the reason of her piteous state;
But sobs are all the answer that he hears,
'Tis vain to warn a woman from her fate.
At last he says—"My Psyche, it appears
You are determined to be sage too late;
Do as you please, and not what I advise,
And wait for time to show that I was wise!

XXXII.

" And see your sisters, if it must be so,
And with these presents send them pleased away;
This you can do, but should they seek to know
Aught of your husband, think on what I say:
Give them no answer, for if chance should show
My face to aught that looks upon the day,
You will be widowed of your lover then,
And never lie within these arms again."

XXXIII.

He ceased, and straight was answered by a kiss:
" How could I live except upon this breast?
Who is my dear I know not, but know this,
I love you more than those that I know best;
Hearts have sharp eyes, nor e'en in darkness miss,
And I can keep a secret like the rest;
Oh! I'll be close and prudent as this night,
That hides my darling from his Psyche's sight.

XXXIV.

" Cupid I'm sure's not half so sweet as you,
You are the rich man seated in his hall;
If I a little love my sisters too,
'Tis but the crumbs that from your table fall:
They and my parents the first friends I knew,
And you came latest, dearer than them all,
Taking this heart and making it your own,
And them the beggars where they ruled alone.

XXXV.

" You'll tell your Zephyr, too, to bring them here,
Won't you? " and here she ends with a caress,
Stops with her lips the reasons of her dear,
Saying she'll kiss their answer into yes;
" My life, my own," she murmurs in his ear,
And how it ended any one may guess.
The morn returning sees his judgment yield,
And Psyche leaves the mistress of the field.

XXXVI.

Scarce was she risen before the sisters came
Unto the rock where she was left alone,
Led by the lying voice of idle Fame,
Thinking her dead, and loudly making moan;
Psyche runs out and calls them by their name,—
"Sisters, I'm here; 'tis Psyche, 'tis your own,
Alive, sound, safe—a truce to your alarms,
A moment more and you are in my arms."

XXXVII.

Zephyr is there and brings them to the gate,
And now she kisses one and now the other,
Laughs, cries, asks questions, nor e'er thinks to wait
Till one is answered ere she ask another;
What do the people say about her fate?
How have they left her father and her mother?
How are her friends, her gardens, and what not?
Nothing is even to her dog forgot.

XXXVIII.

Sudden she cries, " How selfish I have been !
'Tis true 'tis seldom I have company ;
You must be tired and hungry, pray come in
And taste your Psyche's hospitality :
Breakfast is ready, and we'll there begin,
And then I'll show you all there is to see ;
We have the day before us for the sight,
And asking questions gives an appetite."

XXXIX.

Indeed she reads their famine in their gaze.
Full were their bellies of the mountain wind ;
Strega, she seemed as she could eat for days,
And Cagna scarcely leaves a bone behind.
Pleased to be hostess, Psyche laughing says,
" Sisters, I'm glad the banquet's to your mind ;
But what I'd like to know is what you think
Of those who bring us what we eat and drink."

XL.

Cagna, her face was ever at her cup;
Strega, her eyes were glued upon her plate;
Since they began they had not once looked up,
Nor given a thought unto the wights that wait:
Now half appeased they ceased from bite and sup,
And looking each to where the other sate,
Saw knives, forks, dishes, moving without hands,
And heard the voices asking their commands.

XLI.

"Ladies, my servants, and well worth your stares,"
Psyche says gravely—"never in the way;
The good folks of our court complained of theirs—
But against mine I ne'er have aught to say—
Called them the heaviest of all household cares,
Paid to be sulky with five meals a-day;
Mine cost me less, and neither day nor night
Need looking after, as they're out of sight."

XLII.

And now she rises and her treasures shows,
Waking their envy where she thought to please;
Little of art or beauty either knows,
But each admires the riches that she sees:
Nor Strega fails to ask her at the close,
Who is her husband and the lord of these?
And Psyche throws her prudence to the winds,
And answers with the first fib that she finds. (10)

XLIII.

"He is a hunter, and his years are young,
Life in his step, and laughter in his eye:
Oft have the mountains' morning echoes rung,
Woke by his shrill horn as the deer went by:
The sound he loves, to hear his hounds give tongue,
This is his music and his minstrelsy;
Gold are his locks, and rubies are his mouth,
And breathe an air that cometh from the south.

XLIV.

" And for his cheeks, his cheeks are like the morn,
The early morn just blushing into day,
Ere yet the hour's prime to the noon hath worn,
And from the fresh flowers ta'en the dew away;
Lightning his wrath, if any do him scorn,
Changing in smiles as April into May:
This is my husband, beautiful and brave,
Such as the daughter of a king should have."

XLV.

Then she remembers what she had forgot,
And thinks 'twere better had she nothing said;
Fears that her tongue may tell what it should not,
And bring the threatened ruin on her head:
Now Zephyr comes to bear them from the spot,
And from the jewels on the tables spread
They choose the best, and promise her to pay
A longer visit on another day.

XLVI.

But e'er they went they fell upon her breast—
'Twas hard to find her and to lose her so—
Said they were really with her gifts distrest,
And save their love had nothing to bestow:
And now the day was sloping to the west,
And shedding tears the crocodiles did go,
And scarce had crossed the threshold of her door,
Ere the pent malice of their hearts boiled o'er.

XLVII.

Cagna spoke first: "It seems 'tis fortunate
To be born youngest, Strega, what d'ye say?
Some folks are sure the favourites of fate,
And all that's pleasant waits upon their way:
We had to enter in a stranger's gate,
Or else had stayed unmarried to this day,
Far from our parents and our home, but she
Has without stirring happed on what you see.

XLVIII.

"Voices her servants, and each wind that flies
Comes at her call, and is no longer free!
Had I not seen these wonders with my eyes,
I ne'er had credited such things could be:
A house that seems as fallen from the skies,
Gems from each mine, and pearls from every sea,
Here, there, beneath, around her, and above,
And last, the husband that she tells us of!

XLIX.

"Mine's older than my father, and my home [11]
A prison where his jealousy mounts guard;
No other male thing to my sight must come,
The doors and windows they are always barred;
And if abroad it pleaseth me to roam,
He's at my side, and still keeps watch and ward,
Scarce feeling safe though I'm beneath his eyes,
And thinks my maids are lovers in disguise.

L.

"Oh, I could cry to think of it!" "Mine thought
A wife the cheapest," furious Strega says,
"Wanting a nurse, and to her dowry brought
The gout, a legacy of gayer days:
My house a hospital, my life is nought
But one long study of the whims and ways,
Pills, potions, plasters, and each fancied need
Of a disgusting, fretful invalid.

LI.

"These gifts she gave us, as an insolent
Tosses a beggar what he leaves behind,
Then found us tedious and impertinent,
And sent us flying with a puffing wind;
And you stand there and patiently lament
Like a weak coward; Strega speaks her mind,—
I am a woman, and revenge is sweet,
And I will see the upstart at my feet.

LII.

" Nought of the things we've witnessed let us tell !
Good luck is nothing till it's known to men ; ([12])
And till we reach the countries where we dwell,
Let's hide these jewels from all human ken !
Now let us haste and bid this land farewell,
And see our plain but decent homes again, ([13])
And there at leisure look the matter through,
Till ripe reflection teach us what to do ! "

LIII.

So when they came unto their parents' door,
They beat their breasts and loudly did complain,
Making them sadder that were sad before,
Waking their anguish in their souls again ;
And none of all the messages they bore
From Psyche gave, but left them to their pain,
And sought the port, and climbed their vessel's side,
And homeward went across the ocean wide.

LIV.

Meanwhile the unknown warns his love anew:
"'Tis true the danger is no longer near,
But 'twill return, and they'll encourage you
To look and see the features of your dear,
Saying it sure were better if you knew
Him whom you love, and this is what I fear,—
Not that you'd lightly from my wish depart,
But nought's so curious as a loving heart.

LV.

"You are no more your sisters' or your own,
That which is dearer than yourself is mine;
It is the babe that speaks beneath your zone,
And craves your pity for our opening line;
Waiting its sentence from your lips alone,
The hand of Heaven has marked it for divine,(14)
But if you search the secret of my breast,
'Twill be a common mortal like the rest.

LVI.

"The Sirens sit upon their rocks and sing
Of home and country to the wanderer's ear;
So sweet the dreams and memories that they bring,
He still would listen though 'tis death to hear;
But the wise mariner, the vessel's king,
Unto the deep sea bids the helmsman steer,
Nor the set purpose of his course will stay,
Till on the wind the voices die away.

LVII.

"Better a thousand times you saw them not,
Sisters, unworthy of a sister's name!
Rather the fiends that view your happier lot,
And seek to drown their envy in your shame!
Swine that have lighted on a fruitful spot,
And from the moment that they see the same,
Seek but to find an opening to begin
And rout and ravage everything within."

LVIII.

Psyche rejoins,—" Whate'er their malice be,
There is no danger if I hold my tongue;
I know you've little confidence in me,(15)
And think me silly just because I'm young;
'Tis not my fault—besides, I cannot see
From whence this notion of my wits has sprung;
'Twas what you said the last time that they came,
And still our happiness is just the same.

LIX.

" Trust me, when Cagna asked about your looks,
I took a turn and changed the conversation,
Strega the same, and left them on the hooks
Of curiosity and expectation;
I'm sure my name is deep in their black books,
And when they come they'll want a full relation;
But let them want, no answer shall they have—
They'll find me dark and silent as the grave.

LX.

" Pray did I ever try to peep at you?
Have you not always found my candle out?
Though, to be frank, the knowledge is my due—
Not every wife would rest content without:
Besides, I love you, and my love's so true,
That I submit, and do not care about
Aught but to have you alway with me so,
'Tis all the secret that I wish to know.

LXI.

" Darkness is now no longer dark to me,
You are my light and all that I desire,
More than content if one day I may see
In this my child the features of its sire;
Surprise will pay me for this mystery,
'Tis better so, and that which I require
Is but the freedom of an hour or two,
To ask my sisters how my parents do."

LXII.

And then she used some other arguments,
Sweets that all wives with their petitions mingle,
And ne'er desist until their lord relents;
What they may be I know not, being single;
But they can shake the firmest male intents.
So have I heard, and hearing have felt tingle
My ears to think that man, that mighty creature,
Should be so pitiful and weak of nature.

LXIII.

For what is woman but imperfect man,
More soft of body and of soul than we,—
If that she have a soul, a thing you can
Doubt if you like, and in good company,—
Our race's ruin ere it scarce began!
But still 'tis strange the most determined he
Who tries to cross her, aye finds in the sequel
His efforts useless, for the game's unequal.

LXIV.

But this may puzzle wiser heads than mine,
So to my tale: the husband said no more.
Now time and thought had ripened their design,
And Zephyr brought the sisters to her door.
"Psyche, we're come, and mean to stay to dine;
But how! you're not the child you were before," (16)
Says fawning Cagna, simulating joy;
"Strega, I only hope 'twill be a boy.

LXV.

"If it is so, and as its mother fair,
'Twill be a love, a Cupid, I should say, (17)
Children are only what their parents were;
And I remember when you saw the day,
How our proud mother watched the people stare,
Scarce could we keep them from your cot away;
And she who now your absence ill endures,
Again will know a mother's joys in yours."

LXVI.

Psyche, unused to feign except in fun,
Hears, doubts, and thinks her husband must be wrong;
Deems they must love her since they praise her son,
Then gives her orders to the airy throng;
Who now to please them nothing leave undone;
One takes his lyre, another with a song
Beguiles the heavier pleasures of the table,
At which they stayed as long they were able.

LXVII.

But nought of all her hospitality
Can charm the Furies from their cruel intent;
Again they ask her who her lord might be,
And whence he came, and what his absence meant,
His means, haunts, habits, race, and family;
And since nought else their prying will content,
Forgetful Psyche tells a fib the more,
But not the same one as she told before. (18)

LXVIII.

" He is a merchant, and of princely mien,
Nor young, nor older than a man should be;
The silver scattered his jet locks between
But make his broad front statelier to see;
His port erect, not much above the mean,
Brief is his speech, but affable and free
To those beneath him, and to those above—
None such he owns, nor has that I know of.

LXIX.

" His voice is last heard where the elders sit
And weigh the destinies of peace and war;
His word is worth when he has given it
More than the treasure-holds of princes are;
His wisdom gay, and meaning in his wit;
His wealth in caravans is scattered far,
And fleets that voyage to the farthest seas,
And oft he leaves me to attend to these."

LXX.

And here she falters, stops, and says no more,
Fears to be questioned and be found to lie;
Loads them with gifts as she had done before,
And Zephyr calls, and hurried bids good-bye.
Zephyr obedient bears them from the door,
And to the mountain in short space they fly,
And Strega cries, "'Twere hard to find, I wis,
So poor a liar as our sister is.

LXXI.

"He was a youth the last time we were here;
Ten weeks have turned his gold locks into gray—
A merchant from a hunter of the deer!—
Cagna, the thing's to me as plain as day,
She's never seen him, there is nought more clear;
Leave me to manage it, I've found a way
Now to effect what we have longed for so,
But till this minute scarce knew how to do."

LXXII.

And now they went to where their vessels were
Moored in a creek that 'neath the mountain ran,
And bade the mariners that night prepare
To take the sea before the next began;
And as the sun was breaking on the air,
And through the vapours showed his visage wan,
Back to their sister in hot haste they came,
And weeping Strega calls her by her name.

LXXIII.

"Psyche, dear Psyche, sister of my heart,
You that were blest if any could be so,
Like a child dwelling in its world apart,
Careless of perils that it does not know;
That says to sorrow, 'Tell me what thou art,
For still I find too quick the minutes go
For my delight,'—how will you brook to hear
The awful tidings we are doomed to bear?

LXXIV.

"There is a dragon that each night doth come ([19])
Unto this palace, and each morn doth leave;
Spirits, his slaves, the builders of this dome,
And he the husband that your arms receive:
Deep in the ocean is his native home,
The thing's so plain 'tis vain to disbelieve
This is the punishment by Venus sent,
And he the husband that Apollo meant.

LXXV.

"Oft have the fishers in the river nigh
Seen him ascending 'neath the evening star;
And many a peasant in the fields hard by
Come on his slime, and frighted fled afar:
Poison beneath his forkèd tongue doth lie,
Forth from his mouth he vomits flame and war;
All he devours that in his path he finds,
And moves the terror of the herds and hinds.

LXXVI.

"All forms he takes, but still he loves the night;
So plain a mark is set on him, I wis,
The moment that he comes into the light
He stands revealed the foul thing that he is:
Oft with our sex he taketh his delight,
And when his whim hath wearied him of this,
He comes revealed in his own shape at last,
And of the fond wretch maketh his repast.

LXXVII.

"Now 'tis for you to choose what you will do,
Whether to stay and meet your ruin here,
Or take the refuge that we offer you,
And live in safety with your sisters dear:
Our homes have little that is rare or new,
But in their precincts there is nought to fear;
To-morrow follows when to-day is o'er,
And finds us peaceful as we were before.

LXXVIII.

"But if the voices of this solitude,
A dubious love whose fearful end you know,
The various pleasures of this charmèd wood,
Win on your soul and make you loath to go,
Saying our mortal world is hard and rude,
Our task is ended, and we leave you so,
Now to return unto our distant bowers,
And there bewail the sister that was ours."

LXXIX.

Psyche stood pale and voiceless for a space,
Then as if wandering to herself began:
"No man in nature, nor of mortal race—
Thus 'twas, methinks, the crabbed answer ran;
And I have never seen my husband's face,
And still to hide it he does all he can;
Lights in my chamber he would never brook,
And much he threatened if I dared to look.

LXXX.

"Yet as his breath has fragrant mixed with mine,
His soft cheek lying pillowed on this breast,
Oft did I think my lover was divine,
And happy lay and cared not for the rest,
And said, 'Another hour the sun will shine,
Would it could stay for ever in the west!
For he'll be gone,'—and wherefore did he go?
I knew not then, but now too well I know.

LXXXI.

"What shall I do, and whither shall I hie?
Sorrow is mine, and leaves me now no more:
Flying from Sorrow from myself I fly,
And where I wander Shame will go before,
Pointing me out to every curious eye—
This is the fruit my beauty's blossom bore;
Would it had withered ere it came to birth!
Heaven knows I held it still of little worth.

LXXXII.

" If e'er I prized it 'twas for only this,
That it might make me to his eyes more fair:
My thoughts, my soul, my very self was his,
My self was gone, and his was only there,
And he—I dare not think on what he is,
I shall go crazed, and would that so I were!
So would my anguish with my thinking cease,
And memory vanish and leave only peace.

LXXXIII.

" Peace, did I say? that I shall never know;
Peace is a dweller in some happier star:
Here there is nought but treachery, arms, and woe,
Eternal trouble and ne'er-ending war;
And I have now only one way to go,
The road is short, although the bourne is far:
It is the road that leads me to my grave,
That is the only refuge that I have."

LXXXIV.

And here she turned to do what she had thought,
But Strega held her in her arms and cried:
"These are the transports of a mind distraught—
You are young, Psyche, and the world is wide;
And we will carry you where never aught
Shall e'er remind you you have been a bride;
There you'll forget these Heaven-accursèd towers,
And live to be your mother's joy and ours.

LXXXV.

"But there is first a righteous deed to do:
Think on your honour and your royal race,
The wrong he's put on others and on you,
And all the future horrors of this place;
How many a simple loving maid will rue
The day she smiled upon her mother's face,
If you let slip the chance the moments give,
And let the slayer of our sisters live.

LXXXVI.

" Take you this dagger! it is true and keen,
Hide it behind the curtain of your bed,
That which the witness of your shame has been,
Close to the pillow where you lay your head.
Let not the sparkle of its blade be seen!
But when he sleeps, rise softly as the dead,
Lighting your lamp, and play no woman's part,
But manlike pierce the caitiff to the heart!

LXXXVII.

" So will you win the blessings of your kind;
And when the heart has lost its proper peace,
Nothing can make it to its lot resigned,
Save when it bids another's sorrow cease;
This has poured balm on many an aching mind,
And many a suffering spirit found release
From wounds it seemed impossible to bear,
Then when it felt a sister's blessing there."

LXXXVIII.

So by these sophisms and her frenzy led,
Psyche agreed to do the Fury's will;
She moved her lips and yet she nothing said,
But clasped the blade and trembled and was still.
Swiftly the sisters from the palace sped,
Awed by the shadow of the coming ill;
Nor 'scaped the terrors of a guilty mind
Until their vessels left the shore behind.

LXXXIX.

Meanwhile their victim through the palace goes
Ruled by one thought, and gazing vacantly;
Her sense is absent and no longer throws
Its light on that which falls beneath her eye;
Or if it lights upon a thing she knows,
She finds it strange, and noteth curiously
Each small particular, as a blind man might
Undulled by habit if he gained his sight.

XC.

Now she's impatient and the hours are slow,
Suspense is worse than aught that can succeed;
Now they have wings and over-fast do go,
Bringing her nearer to the dreadful deed:
Doubt, fear, remorse alternate ebb and flow,
Horror and hate, bidding her bosom bleed;
That which she hates is he whom she adores,
And he she loves the creature she abhors.

XCI.

Night came, and now unconscious by her side
Sleeping her treasure and her horror lay;
And now she rose, and half within her died
Her heart, and half her pity craved delay;
But fear new courage to her soul supplied,
She lit her lamp and raised her hand to slay
The hideous dragon that they told her of,
And looked and saw—Cupid, the god of love. (20)

XCII.

Lovely he lay, and seeming to accuse
The black and murderous deed she thought to do;
And silent-eloquent his slumber sues
As if undoubting that his dear was true;
Her eyes are swimming, and her feet refuse
To bear her longer as she sinks unto
Her knees, as though forgiveness she implored,
Nor dared to stand and look upon her lord.

XCIII.

His shining wings upon his shoulder lay,
Folded in bright and tremulous repose;
His goldy locks about his front did stray,
And sleep had deepened on his cheeks the rose;
His breath came gently, and a smile did play
Upon his lips, like to the light that goes
Over the flowers before the sun is high,
And half in shade the vapoury valleys lie.

XCIV.

And now she sees his quiver and his bow,
And of his gleaming arrows taketh one,
And tries its point, as wanton children do,
Making believe there's danger where there's none:
Too hard she presses, and her sleeve of snow
Stains with the drops that from her finger run,
And feels new longing 'neath her bosom move,
And all unwitting falls in love with Love.

XCV.

O'er him she bends in rapture that is pain,
Her cheeks, her heart, her being all on fire;
And now she kisses him—and now again,
Fearing he'll wake, her trembling lips retire;
She strains her eyes with looking, but 'tis vain,
Sight is too weak, and fails to her desire—
A sense seemed wanting as interpreter
To break the spell and bring him nearer her.

XCVI.

For ne'er were lovers, were they e'er so true,
That could unite and lose two selves in one;
There is a curtain drawn 'twixt me and you,
Long as we may 'twill never be undone:
Faintly we hear our voices speaking through,
And we would give our lives to look upon
That which's behind, but nothing can we change,
Man must remain unto his fellow strange.

XCVII.

But now took place a fatal accident:
What dire effects from little things arise!
For while she gazed on her delight intent,
The lamp that waited on her wandering eyes
Shook in her hand, and on the sleeper sent
The burning oil, and starting in surprise
He bit his lip to hide an imprecation,
And thus broke in upon her explanation:

XCVIII.

"Well, are you satisfied? 'twere hard to say
Which was the simplest, Psyche, I or you,—
You who were gulled so easily to-day,
Or I who dreamed a woman could be true—
A woman with a secret in her way!
I was, methinks, the sillier of the two.
So 'twas a dragon that you thought to see,
And that sharp plaything there was meant for me.

XCIX.

"Yet was I thought to have some small discerning
Of what the sex is; I was young indeed!
It is a science where one still is learning,
And harder to remember than to read.
One knows—good heavens, how this shoulder's burning!—
One knows, I say, the features of the breed,
But each still hopes to light on the exception,
That proves the rest are nothing but deception.

C.

"And when he's found the phœnix that he sought,
Or thinks he's found, the more he knows the rule,
The more he's seen, experienced, and thought,
So much more surely does he play the fool:
I knew all this before now, and I ought
To have been wiser, brought up in a school
More rich in instances than any other—
I mean the palace of my lady mother,—

CI.

"Whom, by the by, I've disobeyed for you;
But let that pass—that I have done before,
And shall again; it is not that I rue,
'Tis that a dream I cherished is no more.
It was, I think, the first one that I knew;
And though I wake and know that it is o'er,
I would sleep still, and play the hypocrite,
A moment happy in my own deceit.

CII.

"I close my eyes, and I am dreaming yet,
And see again the Psyche that was mine;
Mirth, goodness, beauty, and affection met,
A candid spirit in a form divine,
The painted bow that in my heaven was set,
A vapour coloured with my heart's sunshine;
Well, it is gone! Adieu to the ideal,
Henceforth I'll take up only with the real.

CIII.

"As for you, Madam, I will with your leave
Bid you good-bye; 'tis over with us two:
Nature that made you taught you to deceive,
I have no reason to find fault with you;
'Twas natural also for me to believe,
Being your lover, and I hope the new
Will be as apt and credulous as I;
More I can't wish you, so again good-bye."

CIV.

This as he said spreading his wings to flee,
Ere she could rise to hold him, he was gone;
She followed him as far as she could see,
And still kept gazing after he was flown,
Awhile unconscious of her misery;
And then she turned, and knew herself alone,
A moment paused, as dubious what to do,
Gathered her robe, and through the forest flew.

CV.

Her eyes were wild, her hair in disarray,
And her foot tottered, but her soul was strong;
Her purpose fixt the pole-star of her way,
Though heaved the vessel as it bore along:
Dim as the dawning was her spirit's day,
Night-black the breakers that it moved among,
And now she reached the threshold of the wood,
And by the margin of the river stood.

CVI.

Her arms she stretched and glided to her grave,
Like to a child that seeks its mother's breast;
And if she shivered as the leap she gave,
'Twas but the wind that whistled from the east.[21]
Adown she floated, cradled by the wave,
Her face upturned and settled into rest:
Life was still there, but the rude voyage o'er,
She felt its passions and its storms no more.

CVII.

Now as her robe grew heavier she sank
Beneath the water a hand's-breadth or so,
When that the current bore her to the bank,
Where sat and gazed upon the stream below
An ancient shepherd, watching as they drank
The flocks his charge, and fastened in a row
The vocal reeds that well he knew to play,
And while the hours of solitude away.

CVIII.

His dog was couched beside him, and his crook
Hung on a tree that in the water grew:
Soon as he saw the maiden, this he took,
And to the greensward by her girdle drew
Her he deemed dead, for death was in her look;
But as he listened at her lips he knew
That life still lingered at the threshold there,
As loath to hie him from a house so fair.

CIX.

Soon as his care had waked her from her sleep,
Thus he began in kind simplicity:
"I am a rustic herding silly sheep,
But not unskilful in love's mystery,
And by your sighing and your eyes that weep,
And by your years and pale cheeks that I see,
I judge 'tis love that has beguiled you so—
I've felt the tyrant, and his power I know.

CX.

"These locks you look on were not always gray—
Old as I am I've been unhappy too,
And told my plaint at morning and mid-day,
And when the pastures drank the evening dew:
But that I could not leave my flocks to stray,
I had perhaps been desperate as you,
Nor lived to be the gray-beard that you see,
And teach to you what sorrow taught to me.

CXI.

"Yet had I had a reason for the deed:
There on yon islet where the myrtles grow,
There is a tomb, on whose stone you may read
The name and age of her who sleeps below;
She was the fairest flow'ret of the mead,
Nipped by a frost as it began to blow,
Leaving the tree on which its branch was twined,
To wither on in solitude behind.

CXII.

"But as I hope your lover is not dead,
And you will not regain him by your death!
Be by the art of my experience led,
Nor idly waste the benefit of breath!
Fortune may change and give you him who fled,
But had you stayed some moments more beneath,
You had been cold, and he perhaps had mourned
The loss of her that for an hour he scorned.

CXIII.

"Hope lives with life, and with its parting dies;
Nought but the grave is deaf unto our prayers!
And they the tears that dim your radiant eyes
Are but the mantle that your April wears,
Ere it shall enter into summer skies:
Spring-time is yours, and in its lap it bears
All that to spring-time and to youth is dear;
Winter is mine, and yet I linger here."

CXIV.

Soothed by his words she thanked him for his grace,
And a sad pilgrim through the desert went,
Led by her love that lit up all the place,
And shone the sole star in the firmament.
All else was dark, but light was on her face,
Hushed was the tempest of her soul's lament;
Wide was the desert, and its paths unknown—
She knew not where they led her, but went on.

CXV.

Oft in the night she heard the lions roar,
And once one met her, but went harmless by
Under the moonlight, and was seen no more,
But scarce she marked him, tho' the beast passed nigh:
Sometimes she came unto a poor man's door,
Asked for her love, and taking absently
The bread they gave her, left them wondering there
To find such rudeness in a thing so fair.

CXVI.

But none did harm her, not the robber bands
That harmed all else, and often crossed her way.
Rough, bloody men, the outlaws of all lands,
Awed by a majesty more strong than they,
Came at her call, and asked for her commands:
Ne'er had they seen so beautiful a prey;
But him who touched it they had ne'er forgiven,
Deeming her stricken by the hand of Heaven.

CXVII.

One morn she met her sisters by the sea,
And knew them not, and kneeling did implore:
"Oh will you reconcile my love and me—
He is my love, though I am his no more—
For you are fair, and kind, from all I see?
If you should chance to meet him on the shore,
Tell him you've seen me, and that I am true;
Sure he will hear ambassadors like you.

CXVIII.

" I had a mother, but 'twas long ago,
A father too, that somewhere old and gray
Weeps for his daughter, and lives lonely so;
In dreams he asks me why I went away:
And I had sisters, whom, perhaps, you know;
They were my foes, they tell me, but I say
That 'tis impossible; for I, you see—
I was their sister, and they had but me.

CXIX.

" Yet it may be, for all things now are changed;
All that is happy now is foe to me—
Dark is my day, and Nature seems estranged;
Yet I remember when the land and sea,
The air I breathed, the forests that I ranged,
Birds, flowers, and all the beauteous things that be,
Joined in my joys, my sorrows, and my prayers,
And e'en my being seemed a part of theirs.

CXX.

"Now the wind comes to chill me, and the flowers
Have thorns to wound me; the life-giving sun
Burns on my forehead through the noontide hours,
Till my feet fail me as I wander on.
I am the mark for all the icy showers;
The rich man spurns me, and I find in none
Pity or help, except in those who live
From day to day, and have not that they give."

CXXI.

So she passed on, unanswered, by the wave;
Abashed they stood, and angry to be so;
There is a majesty the injured have,
That ties the tongue and bows the proudest low.
Cagna the first broke silence, as she strave
To hide the shame she was not used to know;
While haughtier Strega moodier grew of mien,
And silent showed how deep the wound had been.

VENUS AND PSYCHE

CANTO III.

VENUS AND PSYCHE.

CANTO III.*

I.

Heroes there are and heroes, and they change
As oft as does the fashion; time ago
They were all ruling monarchs, but 'tis strange
How little monarchs are the fashion now:
A thing that narrows much the poet's range;
Their place is filled but poorly, you'll allow,
By rising barristers and young physicians,
And folk of suchlike desperate conditions.

* The following lines were written in the autumn, at the commencement of the siege of Paris.

II.

Mine is a god,—not all that he should be,—
But very tolerable as most gods go;
Their number's legion, and from what I see
Many are bad,(22) the best are but so-so:
Just now he lay in Paphos by the sea,
While hapless Psyche sought him high and low,
Nailed to his pillow by the burn he'd got,
For oil's no trifle when its boiling hot.

III.

Meanwhile they say the French intend to use it,
With many another amiable invention,
'Gainst their besiegers: I can half excuse it,
Their case's the hardest that their annals mention;
Their *blague*'s not right—but no, I won't abuse it;
'Tis not so odious as the pretension
That marks the Prussian military creature,
The most conceited animal in nature.

IV.

He is well taught, and, if you like, well born—
That is, a son of Adam like his neighbour—
But of a humour scarcely to be borne
With every wight that does not wear a sabre:
Untitled persons, too, he holds in scorn;
Witness the great in literary labour,
Schiller and Goethe, whom he scarce looked on
Till they were dubbed his equals with a Von.

V.

'Tis a great nation, though not sympathetic;
I'm glad to see that they're at last united:
In making war they're very energetic;
I've seen them eat, too, and felt always frighted,
Thinking they'd burst, and heard them grow poetic
As the last sausage in their weasand lighted,
And they set sail well freighted with the real,
For the vague ocean of the vast ideal.

VI.

And yet—and yet they're very honest folk,
Homely and kindly, and, we know, courageous;
A little slow to understand a joke,
Having an *amour propre* that's too umbrageous,
Detest fresh air, and stifle you with smoke,
And not to like them seems, I own, outrageous.[23]
O dreamy Gretchens, and beer-drinking Hermanns,
Sure I am prejudiced against the Germans!

VII.

As for the war, the French were wrong to covet
The Rhine; but now their rivals do as they,
Wanting Alsace,[24] and vowing that they love it,
And burn and kill, to warrant what they say.
She is their sister, say they, and to prove it,
Strasbourg in tears lies bleeding in their way,
Heroic still, though vanquished in the fight,
And says two wrongs can never make a right.

VIII.

Then they put in the plea of self-defence,
And say poor Germany requires protection
From France. 'Tis not too flattering to our sense,
And brings a fable to our recollection
That proves the strong are ne'er without pretence
Against the weak; besides, upon reflection,
I trust not much that old king; by my troth,
The name of God's too often in his mouth![25]

IX.

God is on high, His throne is in the stars;
Down on your knees, old bigot, nor blaspheme!
He joins not in your miserable wars,
For He is God, and other than you deem;
He does not ride in your triumphal cars:
Love to our foes His message; if it seem
Hard to fulfil, respect it, nor proclaim
We do the deeds He loves not in His name!

X.

Berlin at peace believed not in a God,
Mocked those that did; and now cants worse than they;
Makes Him talk German, and says 'tis His nod
Guides their ambition on its gory way:
Just was the cause they fought for, till they trod
The bloody field of Sedan; since that day
The deeds they did the deeds they do condemn,
And wrong in France can ne'er be right in them.

XI.

But these are sorry platitudes, I own—
Mere Christian precepts that no soul cares for;
Revenge and pride the holders of the throne,
They the sole lords the nations still adore!
Well, it is well, and unto them alone
Let us bow down, and talk of God no more;[26]
And being bad, be bad without reserve,
Nor blush to own the devils that we serve.

XII.

Liar! you said you fought not against France,
But against him whose whole life was a lie,
The rascal player at a desperate chance,
Setting a nation's life upon the die.
Him you have ta'en, and still your files advance,
Ere scarce the ink upon your oath is dry;
But I am simple, wondering at these things;
Truth was not made for ministers or kings.

XIII.

Poor erring France! my country loves thee not,
Knows thee still less; mine is a single heart,
Scarce worth the offering, yet it shares thy lot,
And humbly brings thee all it can impart.
Each is first due unto his native spot,
But if his spirit from his land depart,
The world grows larger than it seemed to be,
He has a second country having thee.

XIV.

If thou hast faults, I think not of them now;
Thou hast loved much, and much shall be forgiven;
The kneeling Magdalen of the nations thou,
Forsook by all save by thyself and Heaven!
Bowed in the dust of desolation low,
Out of thy bosom casting devils seven,
Earth's proud ones looking at thine agony,
Saying, "It is a sinner that we see."

XV.

If they have pity, it is not for thee;
No! 'tis for him that brought thee to this pass;
Passion, be silent! let us stop and see
The man himself in fact's truth-telling glass;
Vain tropes away, and pomp of poesy,
And in plain prose set down the thing he was:
As strange a compound as perhaps has been—
A liar, thief, and murderer, to begin,

XVI.

And, what is worse, a traitor; though he had
Learning and sense of what his age desired,
No special prejudice for being bad;
Nay, sometimes did the good that he admired.
He was not made, perhaps, to play the sad
Part that he took; once taken, it required
A scoundrel still—he was it to the end;
And England's very honourable friend.

XVII.

All that's there most respectable bewails
Their idol's fall; the Superfine Review
Talks of the rabble, and notes how it fails
In the respect to fallen greatness due.
I know not who's the writer that so rails,
But rub my eyes, and wonder if 'tis true;
And hope, at all events, they bribed the creature,
Just for the honour of our common nature. (27)

XVIII.

But to my story, which I'd half forgot;
My heart's at Paris, and my pen runs thither.
When epics are an acting, it is not
Easy to dream beside the charmed seas, whither
Venus had gone after she left the spot
Where she saw Psyche; now a gull came hither,
A prying, flying coxcomb of a bird,
Eager to tell her certain things he'd heard.

XIX.

What! a bird talk? yes, Miss, as well as you,
When you did wrong behind your mother's shoulder,
And after wondered how the thing she knew,
Did she not say a little bird had told her?
'Twas a mere figure, thought you; but 'twas true
Once on a time, before the world grew older—
That is, when Psyche flourished and her mate,
In—well, I won't be sure about the date.

XX.

Dates! they are things on which few men are sound,
Few ladies not; yet not to be too hard on
Your memory, 'twas when babies still were found
Beneath the gooseberry-bushes in your garden.
When young, no doubt you've sought them on the ground,
Like me, and now such folly scarce can pardon,
Knowing, in spite of what your elders stated,
That's not the way that children are created.

XXI.

Dear me, 'tis strange how many things we learn
As we grow older scarcely worth the learning!
When Nature makes us of a studious turn,
And childhood's bud into youth's bloom is turning.
The gull had come to talk about the burn
Cupid had got, and much himself was burning
To ease his breast, whose every plume was swelling
With the great secret that he now 'gan telling:

XXII.

" Madam, you know I'm always on the wing,
And so have still the newest information
Of scandals, fashions, and most everything
Fit to engage a person of high station.
To-day I'm grieved to tell you that I bring
Bad news; the tongues of all things in creation
Run on the absence of your son and you, (28)
While they your subjects know not what to do.

XXIII.

" Wit, Pleasure, Grace, are vanished from all parts;
The men are bears, and mostly given to rowing,
And twenty other dull mechanic arts
Well known but seldom and ne'er worth the knowing.
Mere arms and legs, and if they still have hearts,
'Tis but to set the circulation going,
And not for any reasonable employment
Wherein 'tis natural to find enjoyment.

XXIV.

" Guns, gormandising, horses, drink, and play—
These are their toys: their sisters and their spouses,
Not having got such lofty tastes as they,
Are left to yawn their lives out in their houses;
See man at most but once or twice a-day,
Or if by chance they share in his carouses,
'Tis but to see he does not think about them,
But how much better he could eat without them.

XXV.

" That's what they say, and murmur that their queen
Stays at her sea-baths, while all goes to ruin;
And 'tis an age since Cupid last was seen:
None know for certain what your son's been doing,
Save that 'tis said he's in the mountains been,
Somewhere unknown, a-hunting or a-wooing,
And now has come to Paphos with a wound."
Cries Venus, " He's a mistress, I'll be bound!

XXVI.

" One of the Muses has abused his years ;
He's a mere child, and simple as a maid is—
The very subject for a mother's fears !
I always did mistrust those learned ladies.
If so, I'll bring their mount about their ears ;
But up, be quick, and tell me who the jade is—(29)
One of my maids the Graces ? " " An it like ye,
Queen," said the gull, " I've heard her name is Psyche."

XXVII.

" Psyche ! " cried Venus—" liar, insolent !
Dare you say Psyche ? " as his neck she twisted,
Finding the teller most impertinent,
Loving to hear only the truths she listed.
" Then have I been his pleasure's instrument,
The sort of female Mercury that's assisted
To compass things too shameful for narration,
And smooth the highway of his depravation."

XXVIII.

The gull lay gasping very near to death,
And vowed a mental vow of taciturnity,
Which well he kept when he regained his breath,
And probably will keep to all eternity:
Few know the eloquence that lies beneath
His silence; in these pages now they learn it; he
Flew landwards, musing upon life and fortune,
And bard and reader will no more importune.

XXIX.

Cupid meanwhile in Venus' chamber lay,
Not knowing of the storm that was preparing:
Into his heart had pity found a way,
And much he pondered how his love was faring—
Resolved to seek her on an early day,
When like a storm into the house came tearing
Venus, more noisily than was expedient
For a sick-chamber, crying, "Disobedient,

XXX.

"Presumptuous, treacherous, impious! Is it so
That you obey the orders that I gave you,
Bidding you do my vengeance on my foe?
I'm glad you suffer; but it shall not save you
From what you merit, as in time you'll know.
I bade you bring her to the dust, and have you
Dared to admit her, as I'm told the case is,
To your unripe, unnatural embraces?(30)

XXXI.

"Licentious, profligate! yet if you needed
A she—Heaven knows there's plenty of the article,
Any of whom had done as well as she did;
And I, your mother, had not cared a particle.
Though if my counsel—which you never heeded—
Be asked, to say the real thoughts of my heart, I call
It something soon such exploits to begin,
Seeing the down that scarce sprouts on your chin.

XXXII.

" When it's a beard, Heaven knows what you will do!
Maybe you fancy that I'm past childbearing,[31]
But I will have a better son than you,
And give to him the pinions that you're wearing—
E'en though't be Vulcan's—and so show you who
Is master here, irreverent and uncaring,
Precocious, graceless, insolent, capricious,
Unduteous, most conceited and ambitious

XXXIII.

" Imp! Shall I seek my neighbour and my foe,
That stiff-backed, blowsy, dowdy prude Morality,[32]
Who, when I pass her, perks and shudders so,
Yet in her heart loves sinners of my quality?
She would be charmed to welcome me, I know,
And she could do me service in reality;
Yet I could scarce, e'en for your reformation,
Support her odious, tedious conversation.

XXXIV.

"Oh, I could tear your pinions from your back,
Crop your curled locks that mine own breath made fair,
Turn your cheeks' roses to a muddy black
That in my bosom warmed to blushing were;
Put out the torch I gave you, and make slack
Your bow, and break the arrows that you bear—
Then if I cease, 'tis not that I forgive,
But that you are immortal and must live."

XXXV.

Thus as she spake, forth whirling as she'd come,
Ceres and Juno chanced upon her path:
"Well met," she cried, "and welcome to my home;
I see you wonder what has made me wroth,
But 'tis no marvel if I fret and foam,—
You'll scarce believe it, but my Cupid hath
A mistress, Psyche's her accursèd name,
And I, I rest not till I find the same.

XXXVI.

" Him have I caged, and her, when I have ta'en,
I will use so, as never in her life
She has been used, nor e'er will be again.
The creature dares to call herself his wife.
So he has told me, falsely it is plain—
Ay, with such wives the world is very rife.
Wife! I'll unwive her shortly, I'll be bound!—
But can you tell me where she's to be found?"

XXXVII.

" A mistress has he?" laughing Juno said.
" Oh, you are wrong to spoil your beauty so;
Those radiant eyes for frowns were never made:
Had they looked thus on Ida long ago,
Paris had started from the sight afraid,
And I—besides, dear sister, you must know
The boy's but done, in spite of all your rage,
A thing that's very natural at his age.

XXXVIII.

"'Tis not the first, I'll warrant, he has had.
Psyche! well, Psyche is a pretty name;
Were she called Phyllis, it would be as bad—
He would have had a mistress all the same.
But 'tis the fault of parents: it is sad—
Divine or mortal, they are much to blame—
They miss the difference 'twixt now and then,
And think their children children when they're men.(33)

XXXIX.

"'Tis best, believe me, to be something blind
To certain things that should not and must be:
All thinking gods are sure of Juno's mind,
Though few've the right to be as strict as she.
You who have been to many lovers kind,
Will scarce pretend to be less frank than we,
Who unto love the nuptial sanction give,
And for all lesson show the life we live."

XL.

So Juno spake, and Ceres laughed assent;
But Venus, angrier than she was before,
Silent and scornful on her journey went,
Seeking on many a sea and many a shore
Her whom she found not: then her steps she bent
Back to her palace ere the night was o'er,
And bade her pages tie unto her car
The snowy doves that Venus' horses are.

XLI.

Curving their necks the beauteous coursers stood
Unto the yoke it is their pride to bear;
And all the songsters of the grass and wood
Gathered to make her escort in the air:
Before went sparrows of lascivious mood,
Swallows behind, that late returnèd were—
Things that from sunshine unto sunshine go,
With May the only winter that they know.

XLII.

But of their number Nightingale was not—
She had been singing through the livelong night,
And now was sleeping in her secret spot,
Ceasing her plaint an hour before the light.
Corncrake as well his duty had forgot—
'Twas well he was not mindful, or he might
Have spoiled their concert; and nor jay, nor pie,
Nor hanging hawk, nor hovering owl came nigh.

XLIII.

Now as her hand was on the golden rein,
Morning got up, and laughed the earth and sea,
Like to a friend that greets a friend again,
Coming a light to who in darkness be.
Fast flew the car, and all the tuneful train
Opened their throats, and broke in singing free:
Now the clouds part, and let the goddess through
Into her native and unchanging blue.

XLIV.

Heaven's gate she seeks, and Mercury demands,
Her ancient and her natural ally.[34]
The herald comes and waits on her commands,
Standing impatient as in act to fly:
"Brother," she says, "a service at your hands!
I seek a mortal and mine enemy—
Psyche her name—within this roll are shown
The signs and marks by which she may be known.

XLV.

"These and the prize I offer you will see:
Cry them in Asia, Greece, and everywhere!"
The herald bowed, and arrow-like did flee
Unto the kingdoms of the nether air;
Ere noon he stood in Corinth by the sea;
Ere eve at Ephesus, and here and there,
Morning and evening, wheresoe'er he went
He cried and published this advertisement:[35]

Hidden, stolen, lost, or strayed,
One called Psyche, Venus' maid:

Stature mean, blue eyes, and hair
Scarcely dark and scarcely fair.
He the mortal that shall know,
Find, discover, tell, or show
Where the runaway may be,
Let him come with Mercury
Unto Paphos by the sea!
There from Venus' self he shall
Have seven kisses, and withal
One upon his lips shall fall
Longest, sweetest of them all.

XLVI.

The hunt was up, the mountain and the plain,
City and tents were all upon her track:
Many a false Psyche for the true was ta'en,
And many a captor came deceivèd back.
Some scarcely started and returned again,
Not that they scorned the guerdon, but alack!
Fair was the prisoner, and the way was long;
It is well known the absent have much wrong.

XLVII.

But she they sought and found not, lone and far
Like a deer stricken wandered, choosing aye
The ways that wildest and most secret are;
They are the paths that sorrow seeks alway!
Whether a spirit with itself at war
Finds Life discordant, and so turns away,
Unable to regard in its distress
The cruel-seeming face of Happiness:

XLVIII.

Or that it seeks the peace that it has not
There where Peace dwells, for man has not been there
Bringing the fevered life that is his lot,
But all things smile, and nature aye is fair.
Her rightful children still possess the spot,
And all the voices of the earth and air
Tell of a life that lightly passes o'er,
Has what it has, and asks for nothing more.

XLIX.

One eve she stood upon a mountain height
Hard by a cavern, where a fountain rose,
And falling broke the stillness of the night,
The only voice the Alpine silence knows.
Here tirèd Psyche stayed to wait the light,
Soothed by the sound that tempted to repose,
A moment tried to think on her distress,
And then forgot it in her weariness,

L.

And slept. 'Twas nature that contrived it so—
The gracious mother whom we oft accuse,
That knows her children better than they know,
Nor gives them powers but such as they can use;
Seeing them born to suffer as they go,
Not such she makes them as their dreams would choose,
Tireless as gods, invincible and strong,
But faint and weak, nor apt to suffer long.

LI.

The waters were the sleeper's lullaby,
Her couch the hill fern and the heather fair;
The heavens above her for her canopy,
And stars to watch her as she slumbered there—
The sole things worthy such a sight to see;
And there was such a quiet in the air,
As everything stood breathless, and afraid
To break the rest of so divine a maid.

LII.

She was still sleeping when the night departed
And when the morn was risen: sleep and she
Had been long strangers, and the sun that darted
On all the hillside left that corner free.
It seemed a refuge for the weary-hearted—
A chosen place where one would like to be
Laid to sleep out the slumber of no hours
That ends this noisy, troubled day of ours.

LIII.

There is a spot like this in France, and near
The chapel of some saint I now forget,
That thus was chosen by a chevalier
Of Honour's legion, in the days when yet
Honour could stand with Buonaparte; and here,
After his wars were over, he was set
To rest in Nature's consecrated ground,
And wait until another trump shall sound.

LIV.

The pines are ended ere you reach the place,
And there is nothing save the grass and flowers
To break the sternness of the mountain's face—
And soundless pass the solitary hours:
The grave is parted by a little space
From the rock's verge; a village and its towers
Shine far beneath, around the boundless air,
And Peace and Freedom seem united there.

LV.

At last she woke, and drinking of the spring
Her sight seemed clearer and her soul more strong,
And her grief's passion and her wandering
Like an ill dream that lasted had too long;
And downwards where the sun went westering
Looking, she thought, nor what she thought was wrong,
Seeing a town and temple by the sea,
That this the dwelling of her foe might be.

LVI.

"And why," she said, "thus idly do I roam,
Seeking for ever him I cannot find?
This is the place of cruel Venus' home—
So something tells me in my inmost mind:
'Tis by no chance that hither I am come,
But Fate that leads me not as I designed
Unto this palace; thither will I go,
And tempt the worst an enemy can do.

LVII.

" Mercy nor hope nor ask I ; I have been
Her rival, and her prisoner shall be :
Pardon or pity never yet were seen
To dwell with Envy, nor are now to see.
My fate I know, it is not that I mean
To brave it idly, but my destiny
Leads where it leads, my courage all is o'er,
Against the powerful I will strive no more.

LVIII.

" I am weak and a mortal ; be it so !
She is almighty : I can only bear—
Bear without baseness or the empty show
Of strength not mine, 'tis that which I can dare :
Sorrow and I too well each other know
That I should fear to meet a stranger there ;
No kinder comrade could I wish to see—
It was the pledge my darling left with me."

LIX.

With that she turned, and from the hill went down.
Meanwhile a groom of Venus had come out
Upon a private errand of his own,
Which there's no need to trouble you about,
Upon the highway leading to the town,
And casting eyes on Psyche had no doubt
That this was she whom Venus vainly sought,
And suited straight his action to his thought;

LX.

Rudely stepped up and seized her by the hair,(36)
Saying, "Fair mistress, come along with me;
You have already given us more care
Than that you're worth, for all that I can see,
And still my fellows seek you everywhere."
Meekly she followed, knowing courtesy
Dwells not with lackeys, and that night did come
Unto the precincts of her rival's home.

LXI.

The news was brought to Venus, and she rose
Dewy with wine and revel and perfume:
Roses whose petals tumble as she goes,
Went wreathed around her in her girdle's room,
And emerald myrtle that no winter knows,
And poppies momentary-bright of bloom,
Not as to hide, but scattered in such wise
To deck a beauty that disdained disguise.

LXII.

Loudly she laughed, and this and that way swaying
Her head, she cried, "'Tis well that you have come;
Too long, methinks, my daughter has been straying—
Virtue is ne'er so safe as when at home.
'Tis a frail merchandise, and there's no saying
How it may hap when once it 'gins to roam;
But that this lesson you may rightly heed,
Straight shall you have the teachers that you need.

LXIII.

"Ho, minions, call my servants Care and Pain!"[37]
Swift at her side the horrid spectres stood,
Plying their scourges, and now and again
Struck at their victim, and each stroke drew blood,
Nor at her cries felt pity; and the train
Laughed to behold, insatiable of mood,
For nothing sure so cruel can be found
As those who follow Pleasure's heartless round.

LXIV.

Nor when the queen cried "Hold" the grisly pair
Ceased all at once, but raging stood at bay,
Like to two tigers who their keepers dare
To come between them and the tasted prey;
Then as her voice rang louder, as they were
Quelled by some magic, crouched and slunk away
Unto the dungeons whence they had been ta'en;
And jeering Venus 'gan to speak again.

LXV.

But what she said I care not to record.
She was a piece of naked female nature,
An amphora or so of wine aboard,
Nor ever choice of language for that matter;
In ways of thinking, too, at disaccord
With many of the notions that these latter
Days have adopted, as our shelves can tell us—
And then you must remember she was jealous.

LXVI.

And so some flowers of eloquence she had
Which I'll not use—the fashion has gone by.
Read Milton 'gainst Salmasius! 'tis as bad
Almost as good Salmasius' reply:
Luther has also phrases that are sad.
She had not studied in Theology,
But wine and anger give, with proper use,
A tolerable finish to abuse.

LXVII.

She would not slay her, though she wished her dead—
Hate is like love, and studious of disguise,
Leaving its deepest secret oft unsaid:
And Psyche's rival hated in this wise.
Now as she ceased the dark had almost fled,
Though here and there a star was in the skies,
And in the east the mountains you could see,
Craggy, and sheer, and falling to the sea.

LXVIII.

Horrid they dawned and doubtful on the sight,
Wrapt in the shadow of the coming day;
About their hollows lingered still the night,
As loath to hie her from her home away;
The sun was yet to wait for, and the light,
Leaden, and chill, and comfortless, and gray,
Pale from the summits of that wilderness
Seemed but to show the darkness' nakedness.

LXIX.

Upon a peak that solitary stood
There was a fountain hight the Eagle's Well,
Clearest of water and for healing good,
Though few the mortals that its use could tell:
Few were the hunters of that solitude
That had beheld the basin where it fell;
So dismal and so difficult the track,
The boldest well might tremble and turn back.

LXX.

And to turn back was worse than to go on,
So deep and dizzy was the fall below,
And treacherous the pathway, where the sun
Had slippery made the surface of the snow.
The task at first seemed easy to be done,
And that had tempted many to their woe,
Leading them on till they could go no more,
Nor now return to where they stood before.

LXXI.

Above them frowned the precipice, the rocks
Beneath them lay far scattered like a sea
Frozen in tempest, where the startled fox
Roams o'er a solitude as wild as he.
This, and a strayed sheep from the mountain flocks,
And carrion birds the living things you see,
And bones like theirs that leave no name behind,
Picked by the eagles, whitening in the wind.

LXXII.

Hither to fetch her water from the spring
Venus sent Psyche—'twas her death she meant;
Yet she was willing thus to veil the thing,
And not intending come at her intent.
Much was her marvel when she saw her bring
The water back without an accident;
But to her vengeance and her purpose true,
She set her straight another task to do.

LXXIII.

Another and another. Each was done.
She was the boast of Nature; and 'tis said
All Nature's differing children were as one
To come, to go, to counsel, and to aid:
The hare was forward at her beck to run,
Eagles to fly, nor fishes were afraid
Unto the light their scaly heads to show,
And do her errands in the depths below.

LXXIV.

Last Venus said, "This casket that you see
Take, and to Proserpine in Hades go.
Tell her I sent it by your hand to be
Filled with the beauty that her realms bestow;
For that is spent which Ceres brought to me,
Nor till she sends me other can I show
My face in heaven; my pardon would you earn,
This message do—be speedy and return;

LXXV.

"Nor for your life within the casket look!"
She ceased, and Psyche started to obey.
My story tells not of the path she took,
Nor how she 'scaped the dangers of the way;
But they are writ in many an ancient book,
Where you can read them; I will not delay
With Charon, Cerberus, and many more,
Nor tell a tale so often told before.

LXXVI.

But as her journey brought her to the place
From whence returning Paphos she could see,
She sate her down, and rested for a space,
And watched the sails that hovered on the sea:
Said, "Shall I ever see my husband's face?
One of these barks might bring him back to me;
Beauty he loves, and this is what I bear,
And beauty such as the immortals wear.

LXXVII.

"If I might take a little of it out—
Oh, I were simple did I not do so!
It is my only riches, and I doubt
That mine is marred with weeping as I do:
Venus will sure be fair enough without
What I shall steal;" nor making more ado,
She oped the box to do the thing she thought,
But found not that within it that she sought.

LXXVIII.

It was not beauty that its lid contained,
But Stygian sleep that from the opening spread:
Her hands no longer in their grasp detained
The box, and sank her shoulders and her head:
But that a smile upon her lips remained,
He that had looked had thought that she was dead;
It was the smile a maid in sleep might wear,
Told by her lover that he finds her fair.

LXXIX.

Yet from that slumber none may wake again—
Hour follows hour, and day succeeds to day,
Moons wax to fulness and again to wane,
And without count the seasons slip away;
The sleeper feels not any wind or rain;
The frosts of winter and the suns of May
Pass like a shadow, and his sleep receives
No more impression than a shadow leaves.

LXXX.

But to my story: just as evening fell
Cupid came flying where the sleeper lay:
He had been watched so closely and so well,
'Twas but that morning that he 'scaped away.
Awhile he flew o'er mountain and o'er dell,
Pleased to be free, and careless of the way;
So chanced on Psyche, and incontinent
Divined, as love does, what the matter meant.

LXXXI.

The vapoury sleep that on her eyelids pressed
He took, and prisoned in its place again;
Then with his arrow touched her snowy breast,
And wounding stained it with a ruby stain.
She opes her eyes, and gazing from her rest,
Lapt in a dream of pleasurable pain,
Trembles to move, to question, or to know,
And asks this only, to dream always so.

LXXXII.

Smiling he said, "The same fault as before,(38)
And the same Psyche; were the fault not here,
Psyche might well be faultless, but no more
The same, and being different, be less dear.
'Twas not her virtues that I loved her for,
But 'twas herself; and so, methinks, 'tis clear
I loved her faults too, and with these, I say,
Part of my love would also go away.

LXXXIII.

"But up, arise! ere darkness shall come on,
Your errand do, and leave the rest to me."
With that he pointed to the dying sun,
Placed in her hand the casket, and did flee.
Hearing she rose, and until day was done
Went on her way, descending to the sea
Like one who walks in slumber, and at night
Came to the town, and stood in Venus' sight.

LXXXIV.

But Cupid sought the mansion of high Jove,
The threshold reached, and there in beauty waited,
As modest-seeming and afraid to move
Unto the throne on which the sire was seated.
The air was fragrant round the god of love;
Jove smiled to see, and laughing, low repeated
Some words unheard, then signed him to come near,
And slowly bent his awful head to hear.

LXXXV.

Hearing, he smiled, and pinched him by the cheek,
Kissed him, and said, "I know not by what reason
Favour from me or countenance you seek,
Whom you dishonour in and out of season:
Scarce one of all the seven days in the week
But's spent in plots, conspiracy, and treason,
Turning the god that should by Juno slumber,
In running, creeping, winged things without number.(39)

LXXXVI.

"A shower with Danäe, a swan with Leda,
And with Europa—no more on this text,
These things are writ, and known to every reader,
And pious souls are by them much perplext;
Sung, painted, carved on ivory, oak, and cedar,
Till scoffers wonder what will be the next,
Or serious reason on a time that's coming,
And leave my shrines to flamens and old women,

LXXXVII.

"Of which there is great plenty. Yet I'm Jove,
Lord of the sky, and ruler of the weather:
The ill you do me cannot change my love,
And all men's talk I value not a feather,
Placed by my state their narrow rules above.
Tell Mercury to call the gods together—
What's past is past. And—Cupid, should you see
A pretty girl on earth, remember me."(40)

LXXXVIII.

Goddess or god that came not to the call
Without appeal, so ran the proclamation,
Should forfeit thirty shillings.(41) To the hall
In haste came surging the celestial nation.
Aloft sate Jove high thronèd over all:
Now each had settled in his separate station,
And round the ranks the eager murmur ran,
Till all was hushed, as thus the king began:

LXXXIX.

"O gods and goddesses, assembled here
More suddenly than usual, see this boy,
Known to you all from childhood, and, I fear,
To some too nearly to their heart's annoy!
Yet unto me, as to a father, dear;
'Twas in these arms I nursed him, and with joy
All heaven, I ween, will welcome the decree,
Which now shall issue from yourselves and me.

XC.

"His childhood was all mischief, and since then
His youth has been what such a youth must be—
A very firebrand in the homes of men,
In heaven the tyrant of the gods and me.
To-day this youth is ended, and again
Cupid, no more the Cupid that you see,
His life begins, that through all time shall run,
Seeming each day as but that morn begun,

XCI.

"Passed by the side of Psyche. And do thou,
Fairest of all things mortal or divine,
Venus, receive thy daughter, nor allow
Thy force unequal to contend with mine.
Her whom Jove gives, Jove also will endow."
He waved his sceptre, Hermes at the sign
Led Psyche forth; the sire ambrosia took,
And gracious smoothed the terrors of his look,

XCII.

Saying, "Drink, Psyche, and immortal be,
And dwell with Love for ever! Jove has said."
Then in a moment all was revelry,
And in mid-heaven the nuptial feast was spread.
Here on a couch was Juno fair to see,
Beside her Jove, and next to them the head
Of Pysche laid upon her lover's breast,
And after in due order came the rest.

XCIII.

'Twas Vulcan cooked the supper, and the Hours
Around threw roses, and the Graces came
Behind them with the perfume of all flowers,
And Venus dancing mingled with the same;
The Muses singing from their mountain bowers:
Apollo played, and others long to name,
Pan with his reed, and Satyr with his flute;
No god that had an instrument was mute.

XCIV.

So Psyche won her lover, and my song
Ends with a marriage, as most stories do;
The world's so old, and men have lived so long,
'Tis difficult to hit on something new.
Happy they lived together, and 'twere wrong
Did I not tell the ladies that in due
Time brought to bed was Psyche, as was right,
And bore a daughter whom men name Delight.

OCCASIONAL POEMS

OCCASIONAL POEMS.

TO
A SCHOOLFELLOW, ON THE AUTHOR GOING TO LONDON TO STUDY THE LAW.

"VETULÆ NOTÆQUE COLUMBÆ."

November 1866.

DEAR F——, my fancy in the cage of law,
Set with a tribe of rooks to learn to caw,
Flies off at eve, and in its circles true,
Seems but to wander to return to you.
Oh had I wings like that too happy dove,
And could I fly away to him I love,
Soon would I quit the labours of the nest,
And plume my pinions at his side at rest.

But I must keep the prison that I hate,
Beat as I may my feathers at the grate;
Forget the notes so native and so dear,
And to a foreign music tune my ear;
Or mourn too late my liberty of wing,
And starve in winter where I sang in spring.

To you kind Fate a season still has given
To try your wings and visit all the heaven.
Still may you sip from Plato's honeyed page,
Or crack the kernels of the later sage;
Still may you haunt the classic wells of song,
And learn with Juvenal to wither wrong,
From Horace prudence, and in Homer see
The sacred beauties of simplicity.
Mark how the sun of Athens swiftly rose,
And left the horizon rosy at its close:
Then mourn a little interval of night,
Till Roman moons repair the vanished light;
There Scipio great and greater Cæsar see,
And learn 'mid slaves with Cato to be free;

O'er Nero's guilt and Caracalla's sigh,
Then proudly turn and watch Papinian die :
Who in a clime which Freedom long had fled,
Where Valour scarce survived his comrade dead,
Where even virtue by compliance stood,
And at the shrine of Rimmon bowed the good,
Thus answered stern the parricide and king,
'Twas easier to do than praise the thing.(42)
And when you've traversed all the realms of art,
Still thank your country for an English heart.

Yet let your thought, exulting to be free,
Tired in its wanderings sometimes rest on me.
For as the twins, the sons of mighty Jove,
The emblems fair of constancy and love,
When one was doomed to leave the upper air,
The other felt a half intruder there,
Till of his right he forfeited a part,
And gave it to the brother of his heart.
So were we surely destined to be one,
Sworn comrades ere our life had scarce begun ;

At school and truants on the land and tide
In many a pleasure and adventure tried:
When on the Breton coast uprose the main,
And our frail shallop filled and filled again,
Till in our souls we felt the billow's breath,
And partly knew the bitterness of death.
Or when the candles burned with waning light,
And older and unluckier grew the night,
Till of our wealth was only left the shards,
For envious Fate and B—— held the cards.
And then remember but two years ago,
How near we perished in the Wiltshire snow!
When fainter still and fainter grew your powers,
And almost numbered seemed our mortal hours,
Till your fast-failing strength I propped alone,
And in my friend's fatigues forgot my own.

Nor yet, believe me, are our wanderings o'er,
Still will we tempt their accidents once more;
In rapid Elez wet a roving line,
And on the rosy trout of Aven dine:

See if St Herbot's tower retains my name,
Or if the miracles have lost their fame:
Then rest, the labours of the day forgot,
In the calm slumbers of a peasant's cot.
Till then—but how it comes let grammar tell,
I still must stammer o'er the word Farewell.
So I retire till spring our fortune joins
To tail and fee, recoveries and essoigns.

TO PENELOPE BRICE.

SHALL clamorous youth alone our lyres engage?
Go, look at Brice and learn the charms of age!
What though thy vigour slumbers in thy years?
What though thy brow a trace of ruin wears?
Yet it is ruin lovely in decay,
And time has added where it took away.
Here homeless Charity a home doth find,
Here Goodness comes and leaves her frowns behind,
And genial Wit to friendship fast allied,
And Wisdom ripe by long experience tried,
And Hope that panting for a happier sphere
Soars from the clouds that still attend her here.
For little recks it how the morn may shine,
Kind Fate cheats many with a dawn divine;

And bright as fancy decks the coming day,
Still doubt and chance beset the wanderer's way:
And youth must know the storms of many a sea,
And only age from every storm is free;
Nor until evening comes with cloudless skies
Can certain peace within the heart arise.

But thou hast weathered all the storms we fear—
That evening's thine, and evening's rest is near.
And as the swan the envy of the shore
Still sings its sweetest ere it sings no more,
So thy last tones their matchless music give,
And e'en in dying teach us how to live.

TO THE

MEMORY OF THE REV. RICHARD CRAWLEY,
OF STEEPLE ASHTON, WILTSHIRE,
THE AUTHOR'S UNCLE.

Goodness, Friendship, Wit, and Mirth,
All lie buried in this earth.
Sussex bore him, Cambridge bred,
Steeple Ashton holds him dead.
Stranger, if you more would know
Of the man that sleeps below,
And study all his gracious parts
As they're graven on our hearts,
Humbly tread the path he trod,
And see him where he is with God.

THADY O'FLANAGAN TO A FRIEND IN LONDON.

IMAGINATION COVE, MELANCHOLY OCEAN,
May 1869.

SOME countries are famed for their wines or their women,
And some for what has been, and some for what's coming;
But old Ireland's a place that can boast, I'm a thinking,
Of things even finer than lasses or drinking;
And wherever I look at the past or the present,
There's nothing that isn't entirely pleasant.

'Tis a beautiful isle circled round by the sea,
And where are the islanders favoured as we?
For first we're as free as the air or the waves,
And next we've the pleasure of thinking we're slaves;

And no Celt that was sane was e'er yet so demented
That he hadn't a soul above being contented.

At the feasts of my counthry there's whisky in reason,
If you've not much to say you can always talk treason:
Besides then the Saxons, bad cess to them, ever
To please and divert us make every endeavour.
There's always a meeting of one kind or t'other,
Where first we all peaceably fight with each other;
And before we've had time to get weary, a drum
Is heard, and next moment the soldiers they come.
They ride through the market the iligant men,
The light flashing back from their lances, and then
They've hearts in their bosoms so easily melted,
That they all in good order stand up to be pelted,
Till we feel like our ancestors famous in story,
And get home safe with appetites sharpened by glory.

Billy Gladstone, he hears it the very same night,
If he weren't so religious he'd swear with delight;
While John Bright he leaves his potatoes half eaten

To read of his countrymen being well beaten.
Should a hasty recruit prick a boy with his spear,
Why cut-throat and Cossack's the best words they hear;
The 'Irishman' nibs its particular pen,
'Tis taken up sharp by our Parliament men;
The 'Spectator' is shocked, and the dove-breasted
'Star'
Notes how brutal the habits engendered by war.

Then we've plots, the despair of the peoples about,
And as soon as the plotters are caught they're let out,
Or kept just long enough to excuse a collation,
With the dungeons of Britain to point the oration.

Then for heroes renowned for tongue, pistol, or pen,
Sure the island's entirely full of fine men.
There's Stephens at Paris, and Warren at sea,
And O'Farrel in heaven as high as can be,
For where is the "martyr as noble as he"?
Then O'Sullivan's self, but a few weeks ago,
A mayor was a tradesman set up for a show,

When brief like the north light O'Sullivan came,
And a halo eternally rests on the name.
But now I remember you've asked my opinion
On Irish complaining and English dominion.
First the Church—'tis a question without any doubt
As good as another to break heads about.
Next the land—faix, to me it is really the same,
If the wine's good I'll drink any toast that you name.
But there's one thing that, frankly, our boys doesn't please,
'Tis that so many landlords are still absentees.
The country's extensive, more guns there were never,
While the birds, they've been lately more wilder than ever:
Some shootings e'en now may be had for the giving,
And without 'em this country'd be not fit to live in.
In winter—

"*O'Flanagan.*"

"*Coming direc'ly.*"

You won't be annoyed if I end rather quickly,
There's a beautiful cover just down by the water,

And beside it old H—— on the walk with his daughter;
You're a sportsman yourself—such a chance!
"*In a minute.*
Is the blunderbuss right and the waterspout in it?"
"*Yes, yes.*"
Then my duty to Synan, no more,
May he live till his death if he don't die before![43]

ON A CERTAIN PEDAGOGUE.

A HUNGRY eagle, wishing to be fed,
Let fall a tortoise on a poet's head,
And Athens mourned her noblest singer dead.
Oh had the bird our bald tormentor known,
And taken P——'s numskull for a stone,
By all the names that frighten gods and men,
'Twould be the tortoise that would suffer then.

ON THE ELECTION OF A MEMBER FOR TIPPERARY.

A JAIL-BIRD's our member, 'tis true;
Good folk, you've no reason to rail:
'Tis a comfort for me and for you
To know that our member's in jail.

EPIGRAM.

"PLUTO, that dog confound!" a donkey brayed,
He's got the manger that for me was made.
I cannot lift my nose to smell the feast,
All for that snarling and unwholesome beast.
As in the ancient fable of the sage,
So youth impatient carps at snarling age:
So sullen sixty stands in twenty's way,—
We have the appetite and they the hay.

ON A MODERN GRACCHUS.

THE slave that found the noble Gracchus' head,
To gain more gold replaced the brains with lead;
Should B——'s ever in such scales be thrown,
Finder, be wise, and leave the brains alone.

ON A LATE EDITION OF SIR JONAH BARRINGTON'S MEMOIRS.

FORTUNE, pleased with Jonah's wit,
Chose an ass to edit it;
Not that as with many a she,
Fools with her in favour be,
But that wit like lamps by night
Placed by dulness shines more bright:
So, great Y——g, she pitched on you,
As the dullest pate she knew.

TO LOUISE,

WITH A BRANCH OF MISTLETOE.

1.

MORTALS, whosoe'er ye be,
Know the consecrated tree:
Tender virgins, bow before it;
Wanton bachelors, adore it.

2.

Maidens, if a gallant lingers,
Nature gave you thumbs and fingers;
Cluster round the recreant lover,
Pinch him black and blue all over.

3.

Gallant, if she's coy and proud,
Think at Christmas much's allowed;
Catch her when she least expects it,
Kiss her till she recollects it.

4.

If there's one in form or feature
Stinted by step-mother Nature,
Shower courtesies upon her,
'Tis what weakness claims of honour.

5.

Beauty is divine, I know it,
The more we pay the more we owe it;
Yet to have a fault is human,
And she's lovely if she's woman.

6.

Daughter of a brighter star,
That like morning comest from far,
Morning is the time for folly,
Night has nought but melancholy:

7.

Fleet and few our hours of laughter,
Noon will come and darkness after;
Take my berries, and in mercy's
Hallowed name forgive my verses.

AUTUMN AT HUELGOAT, BRITTANY.

1.

THE bloom is fading from the heather,
The gorse has scattered half its gold,
And, presaging a ruder weather,
September's winds blow keen and cold.

2.

They've touched Bellaise's (44) wood of story,
They've scorched the fern above the rill;
The ashes of the summer's glory
Smoulder and die on yonder hill.

3.

The year's decaying fires to-morrow
Warm them to transient life once more,
But cannot stay the night of sorrow
That spreads its shadows o'er the moor.

4.

The vast gray stones that bridge the river,
And choke the valleys all around,
Are vaster and more gray than ever,
In concord with the saddened ground.

5.

In kindlier climes the summer flying
Leaves half her smiles upon the plains;
The red fruit hides the leaf that's dying,
And yellow waggons crown the lanes.

6.

But they are gone, our laughing hours,
We have nor sheaves nor orchards here;
And brief the sun and few the flowers
That cheer our mountain's sullen year.

TO ———

Oh come not to my grave when I am dead;
The soul you loved was never buried there:
It did not linger till the prayers were said;
It tarried not in the material air.
It went not upward to the painted sky,
Nor to the realms of earthquake and of flame:
Sparks come and go, meteors are born and die;
How do they come? they vanish as they came.
Yet would you hold the friend you deemed so good,
Live in his life, together and alone,
The sweet society in solitude,
When two harmonious spirits moved as one.
Oh let your mind my cemetery be!
So shall I live in heaven, living in thee.

WILL DRAWN FOR AN OLD AND FAITHFUL FRIEND.

I, SARAH L——w, better known
As Giddle when I lived alone,
Having observed that humble folk
Must like their betters one day croak,
Though trusting much in dose and pill,
Do notwithstanding make my will.
Briefly to speak, my worldly gear
I leave unto my husband dear—
Quibblers, be still, I mean my all,
Let it be real or personal:
My memory unto those I served;
Long be it with their lives preserved!
To earth my body I commit,
My soul to Christ who died for it.
So welcome death when death must be,—
This is the testament of me.

TO LOUISE,

WITH A VENETIAN GLASS.

Mirror, unto England fly,
Seek Louise, and say that I
Sent you to her that you might
Tell her, standing in her sight,
First at morn and last at night,
That my heart a virtue has,
Other, greater than your glass;
For upon it, though afar,
Imaged too the absent are.

ISOLE.

A PORTRAIT.

1.

Her sleep was calm as summer night,
Her opening eyes like spring awaking;
Her smile as fleet as is the light
Of morning o'er the mountain breaking.

2.

Her tears were those that April knows,
Her breath the airs that rise at even,
Her gaze the western star that glows
Beyond its sisters in the heaven.

3.

Her spirit as the air was free,
  Her bosom as the earth was tender,
Her humour various as the sea,
  And men her slaves were to defend her.

4.

Her hair was like the ruddy flame,
  Her voice was as the silver water:
'Twas Nature to her cradle came,
  And gave these gifts unto her daughter.

SONNET.

Whom the gods love die young! The happiest time
Comes first, 'twere better not to live the rest;
Or live it in the visions of our prime,
Nor wait for Age to claim hope's interest.
So might we spendthrifts lay our path with flowers,
And take the riches of a score of springs,
While yet the lagging and delightful hours
Flew softly, dropping pleasure from their wings;
Breathing no other charge against to-day,
Like children hurrying through their first romance,
Save that it stands in bright to-morrow's way,
Nor lets us see the happy end at once—
But these gay hopes would make it hard to go;
'Twere better not to be than to die so.

LINES WRITTEN IN DESPONDENCY.

Honour and gain may ne'er be mine,
'Tis not for these I live;
I ask but what the free sunshine
And liberty can give,
To wander out from men afar,
Where solitary waters are.

In mountain-cradled valleys, where
The sun sets sooner than elsewhere,
And gorse and heather clothe the sides,
And silence in the rocks resides;
Save where the hidden water cool
Softly falls into the pool,

Or from some far sheep-cote rings
The tune that all the country sings.
Where pale primrose, with watching wet,
The wild rose and the violet
Open to salute the day,
With strife and envy far away.
The single pass at either gate
With rocks and cataracts is strait,
And set with stones so sharp and thin,
Hardly could they enter in:
While heavenward 'twixt each craggy wall
Towers the falcon over all,
Like an armèd sentinel
Set over an enchanted dell.

There let me live, there let me die,
Far from the vulgar noise
Of cities, and from vanity,
And the laborious toys
Wherewith men strive to while away
Their brief but heavy-footed day.

Where Ellée and where Isole meet,
Where Blavet stays his shining feet,
Where truant Scorff in summer flies,
And rosy trout in Aven rise,
And April Odet, heard from far,
Thunders into Stan ga la; (45)
Or lone Branilis' fane looks down
O'er bilberry, moss, and heather brown,
Where Elez near the old monks' home
Lingers e'er he falls in foam;—

There let me live, for surely there
Peace may be found if anywhere;
And peace is all that may be mine,
  For happiness I sought
In love, in wisdom, and in wine,
  But found it not in aught;
I found it not, nor any have
Who seek it on this side the grave.

And ye who say that otherwhere,
In worlds as beautiful and fair,

When all this shifting scene is past,
It may be, must be, found at last
By those who 'gainst injustice stood,
The brave, the gentle, and the good;
Where youth and beauty grow not old,
And true love never waxeth cold,
Nor error's mists deform the air,
And neither death nor change is there.

I know not if my ear is slow,
  Or heart is dull with years,
Your words seem uttered long ago
  To childhood's hopes and fears—
An echo falling faint and far
To men who lost in deserts are.

TO ——

1.

THEY tell me that thou art not such
As I have always thought;
That I have worshipped thee too much,
Nor judged thee as I ought;
That love is blind, and cannot see
Specks in the sun, or fault in thee.

2.

They said that many bend the knee
To idols falsely bright,
And so I might adore in thee
A spirit not of light;
That reason's scales alone could show
What all my love could never know.

3.

That I must nothing hold as true,
Until its truth was proved,
And give examination due,
And doubt before I loved,
And after that continue still
To think that good might yet be ill.

4.

But doubt expires in the birth,
Where faith hath once been given,
Whether of thee I love on earth,
Or Him who reigns in heaven;
'Tis not a lover that can dare
To question where he offers prayer.

5.

No! I will look on thee alone
Although it make me blind,

Not on the shadow that is thrown
Upon a baser mind;
For earthly waters troubled are,
And break in pieces every star.

FROM LUCRETIUS.

'Tis sweet to stand on the firm shore and see
A swimmer striving with the billows' breath;
'Tis sweet afar to sit when battles be,
And see men threading the grim dance of death.
Not that to gaze on others' toil and pain
Gives any peace or pleasure to the breast,
But that the thunders of the foe and main
Wake up new beauties on the face of rest.
Sweeter to stand on Wisdom's height serene,
And through the mists that hold the nether air
To see the path to Life untried and green,
All else with Error's myriad footsteps bare;
Not scorning the poor victims of the night,
But knowing more the difference of light.

TO THE EVENING.

1.

Come, queen of fantasy,
Stream, field, and sky are tortured with the light;
We cannot any more
Support the eye so pitiless and bright
Of heaven's inquisitor:
Come, airs that fly,

2.

Stillness that cannot stay,
Prophetic hues and transitory bloom,
Last fitful gleams of life:
Come, tantalising passionless perfume,
Lull the wild limbs of strife.
Things of a day,

3.

Daily we die, are born.
Not only the brief flowers and butterflies
Are measured by the sun,
And when the god their being worships dies
Through their due hours have run;
We with the morn

4.

Wake from a nightly death,
Miscallèd sleep by things more wise than they;
Our strength it is as theirs,
It waxeth and it waneth with the day,
Kind night the loss repairs;
And with new breath

5.

We flutter forth once more,
We rise as they another and the same:
No day is like the last,

Yet are they endless; that is gone that came,
Another follows fast,—
Soon that is o'er.

6.

As from its ashes cold
Rises the fabled bird of Araby,
We till our year is out
Ever return; our humours change and flee,
As change the suns about,
Till the tale's told.

7.

We whom the Muse hath shown
This mystery, continual birth and death,
When our hour draweth nigh,
Our limbs wax faint and slowly comes our breath;
Yet seems it hard to die
Friendless, alone:

8.

Ever we call to thee,
Goddess all-present, infinite Loveliness,
Link all thy arms with mine,
Passing to dreadful death and nothingness;
My being fades in thine
And thou in me.

TO ———

When as I think on all the love I give
To one who still must marble be to me,
When I regard how all my fellows live
And marvel at my loving only thee,
Then I lament that I am not as they,
Whose happy souls with mutual ardour burn,—
That I must give and ever give away,
And have for all my giving no return.
Sometimes I think that I will wander forth
To bear my worship to some other shrine,
And ransack all the places of the North,
West, South, and East for one that's like to thine,—
But I can ne'er that wise apostate be
True to myself, and renegade to thee.

Like the day when vapours dun
Have obscured the glorious sun,
Like the night when stars are hid,
Like the year when spring is dead,
Like the flower whose bloom hath flown,
Is the heart when love is gone.

But the star the moment shrouds,
From the corner of the clouds
Issues brighter than before ;
And from nature's dewy floor
Surely rises up the spring,
Bearing youth to everything :

But the flower will bloom again,
And eternal from the main

To the realms that wait for morning
Comes the sun their shores adorning:
And the rains bring back the river.
Love, once gone, is gone for ever.

SOULS WAITING.

Banqueter, bereft of breath,
Welcome to the halls of Death!
You are Life's last herald here,
Tell us how you liked his cheer.

SOUL FROM EARTH.

Well, 'twas good and it was bad,
Much I wanted, much I had;
Awkward felt as it began,
Freer as the liquor ran:
Liked the host and liked the wine,
Thought the women half divine;
Looked and laughed and drank my fill,
Then came Death and brought the bill.

Soul ascending.

Feaster from the House of Light,
I am bid his guest to-night;
You have known the upper air,
How shall I behave when there?

Soul from Earth.

Pass as others passed before;
Pain is porter at the door,
Sickness hovers round the gates,
Famine at the table waits.
As I sought my charger's stall,
Swords were flashing in the hall;
Yet the welcome's warm within,
You will hear the feaster's din;
Then as leap both heart and eyes,
Mind this counsel and be wise:
There are headaches in the wine,
Women are not all divine;
Sweet and bitter's in the cup,
Yet since 'tis offered, drink it up.

Like a gently-nurtured guest,
Take what's given you for the best;
When 'tis time to say good-bye,
Say it with all courtesy.

NOTES TO VENUS AND PSYCHE.

CANTO I.

1.

"Vel certe rursum novo celestium stellarum germine, non maria, sed *terras*, Venerem aliam virginali flore præditam, pullulasse."—Apuleii Metamorphoseon, lib. iv.; sive De Asino Aureo, lib. iv.

I owe some excuses to my fairer readers for the language of the notes; but no longer protected by the licence of verse, I shrank from the dangers of translation. Besides, I was not unwilling to give the gentlemen an opportunity of displaying their learning and gallantry in explaining a little Latin, as I have noticed that there are few things that they do with more complacency. For those who know Italian there is a translation of the sixteenth century by Messer Agnolo Firenzuola of Florence, which perhaps surpasses its original, and is also esteemed a model of Tuscan style by the judges in such matters. I unfortunately did not become acquainted with it till just at the conclusion of my labours.

2.

"En rerum prisca parens, en elementorum origo initialis, en orbis totius alma Venus, quæ cum puella partiario majestatis honore tractor!"—*Id.*

3.

"Puerum suum, pinnatum illum et satis temerarium; qui malis suis moribus contempta disciplina publica, flammis et sagittis armatus, per alienas domos nocte discurrens, et omnium matrimonia corrumpens, impune comittit tanta flagitia, et nihil prorsus boni facit."—*Id.*

4.

"Virgo ista amore flagrantissimo teneatur hominis extremi; quem et dignitatis et patrimonii simul, et incolumitatis ipsius fortuna damnavit: tamque infirmi, ut per totum orbem non inveniat miseriæ suæ comparem."—*Id.*

5.

"Interea Psyche cum sua sibi perspicua pulchritudine nullum decoris sui fructum percipit. Spectatur ab omnibus, laudatur ab omnibus: nec quisquam, non rex, non regius, nec de plebe saltem petitor cupiens ejus nuptiarum accedit."—*Id.*

6.

"Sed Apollo, quanquam Græcus et Ionicus, propter Milesiæ conditorem, sic Latina sorte respondit:

Montis in excelsi scopulo desiste puellam
Ornatam mundo funerei thalami:
Nec speres generum mortali stirpe creatum,
Sed sævum atque ferum, vipereumque malum:
Qui pennis volitans super æthera, cuncta fatigat,
Flammaque et ferro singula debilitat:
Quem tremit ipse Jovis: quo numina terrificantur:
Fluminaque horrescunt et Stygiæ tenebræ."—*Id.*

7.

"Jam sentio, jam video solo me nomine Veneris perisse."—*Id.*

CANTO II.

8.

There are no roads at San Terenzo; the village is built in the corner of a small bay between the sea and the hill, which rises abruptly behind, and up which you can mount by a number of little paths or staircases, which seem to lose themselves in the dense vegetation. Shelley's house is exactly as I have described it—a somewhat deserted-looking building, standing all by itself at one end of the village; beyond it a beautiful walk, winding along the rocks between the woods and the sea. If the poet could return to his old abode, he would find congenial sentiments around him, as the inhabitants, men and women, are all republicans. The same is the case with the little town of Lerici opposite, and I suppose is partly due to old Genoese traditions; indeed, as I have heard it remarked in the country, every Italian in a certain sense "nasce republicano." The naive way in which these fishermen and sailors expressed their horror of kings and kaisers often reminded me of the Covenanters of Walter Scott; nor on occasion, I think, would the biblical ferocity of the Scotch prelate-haters be wanting. For the rest, they are daring, enterprising fellows, and very honest; indeed, the population of these coasts struck me as the manliest I had seen in Italy. I particularly remember a group that gathered round me as I was waiting for a wind in the Magra, as being composed of the finest and most athletic-looking men I have ever encountered. As to my friends of San Terenzo, in spite of their opinions they habitually go barefoot, a novel contrast to the species of republicans most commonly known, whose republicanism not only shoes them, but often feeds, clothes, marries, and buries them into the bargain.

9.

"Clemens quidam sonus."—Ap. Met., lib. v.

10.

"E re nata confingit, esse juvenem quendam et speciosum, commodum lanoso barbitio genas inumbrantem, plerumque rurestribus et montanis venatibus occupatum."—*Id.*

11.

"At ego misera, primum patre meo seniorem maritum sortita sum, dein cucurbita glabriorem, et quovis puero pumiliorem, cunctam domum seris et cathenis obditam custodientem. Suscipit alia: Ego vero, maritum articulari etiam morbo complicatum curvatumque . . . sustineo, plerumque detortos et duratos in lapidem digitos ejus perfricans, fomentis olidis et pannis sordidis et fœtidis cataplasmatis manus tam delicatas istas adurens, nec uxoris officiosam faciem, sed medicæ laboriosam personam sustinens."—*Id.*

The learned reader will see that I have not deepened the colours of Apuleius.

12.

"Nec sunt enim beati quorum divitias nemo novit."—*Id.*

13.

"Lares pauperes nostros, sed plane sobrios."—*Id.*

14.

I give the following as a characteristic specimen of Apuleius' style: "Nuntio Psyche lætata florebat, et divinæ sobolis solatio plaudebat, et futuri pignoris gloria gestiebat, et materni nominis dignitate gaudebat."—*Id.*

15.

"Jamdudum, quod sciam, fidei atque parciloquii mei perpendisti documenta."—*Id.*

16.

"Psyche non ita ut pridem parvula, et ipsa jam mater es."—*Id.*

17.

"Qui si parentum, ut oportet pulchritudini responderit prorsus Cupido nascetur."—*Id.*

18.

"Pristini sermonis oblita . . . ait maritum suum de provincia proxima, magnis pecuniis negotiantem, jam medium cursum ætatis agere interspersum rara canitie."—*Id.*

19.

"Immanem colubrum, multinodis voluminibus serpentem, veneno noxio colla sanguinantem, hiantemque ingluvie profunda, tecum noctibus latenter acquiescere."—*Id.*

20.

"Videt omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam, ipsum illum Cupidinem formosum Deum formose cubantem."—*Id.*

21.

This idea is no doubt a reminiscence from Hood, though I did not think of it when I was writing the lines.

CANTO III.

22.

As, for instance, the deity of the Emperor of Germany.

23.

Indeed it almost seemed so to myself, writing in the month of October, when the greater part of the nation seemed to have gone Prussian-mad, when every fellow-countryman I met had his mouth wide open

with admiration of German learning and virtue, and when an influential journal among other extravagances declared that French resistance was the more criminal, in that it forced such cultivated warriors to risk their lives against raw peasants and sailors. I am now reading in the same columns the most excellent reflections on the conduct of "Holy Willie" and his adviser. It is a pity they were not made six months sooner.

As to John Bull's attitude generally in the matter, it has been compared by a witty writer to that of a big boy in a school who ought to keep order and does not. The comparison that I should rather incline for would be that of an old and successful tradesman (indeed, is not the House of Commons full of them?) whose one idea in politics is to avoid having his own windows broken.

24.

Or Elsass and Lothringen (Lorraine), as Professor Von Sybel lately called them, addressing an English audience. All thieves have their Latin.

25.

Compare on this point a verse of the New Testament. The Emperor's ancestor invading Silesia acted differently. "On voulut mettre sur ses drapeaux," says Voltaire, "cette devise, *Pro Deo et patria;* il raya *pro Deo;* disant qu'il ne fallait point ainsi mêler le nom de Dieu dans les querelles des hommes, et qu'il s'agissait d'une province et non de religion."—Siecle de Louis XV., ch. 5.

26.

Compare the following passage from the scene between Joseph Surface and Lady Teazle in the 'School for Scandal:'—

"*J. S.*—Heaven forbid that I should persuade you to do anything you thought wrong! No, no! I have too much honour to desire it.

"*Lady T.*—Don't you think we may as well leave *honour* out of the argument?"

27.

I remember a Belgian gentleman, in answer to my ridicule of his idea that certain English newspapers were bribed during the war, handing me one of the journals in question, with the remark,—"Read that; no one could be so servile for nothing." What is indisputable is the hatred which these organs have succeeded in exciting against their country in two nations with whom we have every interest to be on friendly terms, the French and Americans.

28.

"Jamque per cunctorum ora populorum rumoribus conviciisque variis omnem Veneris familiam male audire, quod ille quidem montano scortatu, tu vero marino natatu secesseritis. Ac per hoc non Voluptas ulla, non Gratia, non Lepos, sed incompta, et agrestia et horrida cuncta sint. . . . Hæc illa verbosa et satis curiosa avis."—Ap. Met., lib. v.

29.

"Prome agedum . . . nomen ejus quæ puerum ingenuum et investem sollicitavit . . . seu de Musarum choro, vel de mearum Gratiarum ministerio."—*Id.*

30.

"Tuis licentiosis et immaturis amplexibus."—*Id.*

31.

"Nec me jam per ætatem posse concipere."—*Id.*

32.

"Petamne auxilium ab inimica mea Sobrietate, . . . aut rusticæ squalentisque feminæ colloquium prorsus adhibendum est?"—*Id.*

33.

"An ignoras eum masculum, et juvenem vel certe jam quot sit annorum oblita es?"—*Id.*

34.

"Scis, . . . Venerem sine Mercurii præsentia nil unquam fecisse."—Ap. Met., lib. vi.

35.

"SIQVIS A FVGA TRAHERE, VEL OCCVLTAM DEMONSTRARE POTERIT FVGITIVAM REGIS FILIAM, VENERIS ANCILLAM, NOMINE PSYCHEM; CONVENIAT RETRO METAS MVRTIAS MERCVRIVM PREDICATOREM, ACCEPTVRVS INDICINÆ NOMINE AB IPSA VENERE SEPTEM SAVIA SVAVIA, ET VNVM BLANDIENTIS ADPVLSV LINGVÆ LONGE MELLITVM."—*Id.*

36.

"Et audaciter in capillos ejus immissa manu, trahebat eam, nequaquam renitentem."—*Id.*

37.

"Ubi sunt, inquit, Sollicitudo atque Tristities ancillæ meæ?"—*Id.*

38.

"Et ecce, inquit, rursum perieras, misella, simili curiositate."—*Id.*

39.

"Licet . . . istud pectus meum . . . convulneraris assiduis ictibus, crebrisque terrenæ libidinis fœdaveris casibus, contraque leges, et ipsam Juliam, disciplinamque publicam turpibus adulteriis existimationem famamque meam læseris, in serpentes, in ignes, in feras, in aves et gregalia pecua serenos vultus meos sordide reformando."—*Id.*

40.

"Si qua nunc in terris puella præpollet pulchritudine, præsentis beneficii vicem per eam mihi repensare te debere."—*Id.*

41.

"Si qui cœtu celestium defuisset, in pœnam decem millium nummum conventum iri pronuntiare. Quo metu statim completo celesti theatro pro sede sublimi sedens procerus Jupiter sic enuntiat: Dei conscripti adulescentem istum, quod manibus meis alumnatus sit, profecto scitis omnes: cujus primæ juventutis caloratos impetus freno quodam cœrcendos existimavi. . . Et porrecto ambrosiæ poculo, Sume, inquit, Psyche, et immortalis esto: nec unquam digredietur a tuo nexu Cupido; sed istæ vobis erunt perpetuæ nuptiæ. Nec mora, cum cœna nuptialis adfluens exhibetur. Accumbebat summum torum maritus, Pysche gremio suo complexus, sic et cum sua Junone Jupiter, ac deinde per ordinem toti Dei. . . . Vulcanus cœnam coquebat. . . . Sic rite Psyche convenit in manum Cupidinis: et nascitur illis maturo partu filia quam Voluptatem nominamus."—*Id.*

NOTES TO OCCASIONAL POEMS.

42.

After the murder of Geta, the præfect was commanded to exert the powers of his skill and eloquence in a studied apology for that atrocious deed. "That it was easier to commit than to justify a parricide," was the glorious reply of Papinian, who did not hesitate between the loss of life and that of honour.—Gibbon's Holy Roman Empire.

43.

Every one will remember the honourable member's words in the House of Commons, to the effect that Colonel —— had held his seat for forty years, and would continue to hold it for the term of his natural life—*if he lived so long*.

44.

The fair Bellaise, according to tradition, had her castle in the wood I allude to, and into the abyss in the river beneath she used to throw down her lovers when she was tired of them.

45.

Or Fairies' Glen in English. The names above are those of different rivers in Brittany.

THE END.

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